

THE ARGOSY.

MAY 1, 1869.

ROLAND YORKE.

A SEQUEL TO "THE CHANNINGS."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE," "GEORGE CANTERBURY'S WILL," &c.

CHAPTER XIII.

TAKING THE PLACE OF JELF.

"I will stick in my gizzard for ever. I can see that. An awful clog, it is, when a fellow has dropped into mischief once in his life, and repented and atoned for it, that it must be cast in his teeth always; cropping up at any hour, like a dead donkey in the Thames! I might as well have stayed at Port Natal!"

Such was the inward soliloquy of Mr. Roland Yorke as he bent over his writing after that overwhelming question of Hurst's, "Did you take it?" Hurst, really grieved at having hurt his feelings, strove to smooth away what he had said.

"I beg your pardon, old fellow," he whispered. "On my honour I spoke without thought."

"I dare say you did!" retorted Roland.

"I meant no harm, Roland; I did not indeed. Nothing connected with the past occurred to me."

"You know it *did*," was the answer, and Roland turned his grieved face full on Hurst. "You know you wanted to bring up that miserable time when I stole the twenty-pound note from old Galloway, and let the blame of it fall on Arthur Channing. Because I took that, you think I have taken this!"

"Hush! You'll have them hear you, Yorke."

"That's what you want. Why don't you go and tell them?" demanded Roland, who was working himself into a passion. "Proclaim it aloud. Ring a bell, as the town-crier does at home on a market-day. Call Greatorex and Brown and Jenner up from their desks. Where's the good of taunting me in private?"

Hurst kept his head down, and wrote on in silence, hoping to allay

the storm he had inadvertently provoked. In spite of his protestations, he *had* spoken in reference to that past transaction, and the tone showed the truth to Roland; but still he had spoken thoughtlessly. Roland, as he believed, was no more guilty of this present loss than he himself was; and he felt inclined to clip his tongue out for its haste.

Pushing his hair from his hot face, biting his lips, drawing deep breaths in his anger and emotion, stood Roland. Presently the pen was dashed down on the parchment before him, blotting it and defacing it for use, but of course that went for nothing, and Roland stalked to the desk of Mr. Bede Greatorex:

"I wish to say, sir, that I did not steal the cheque."

The words took Mr. Bede Greatorex by surprise. But he had by this time become pretty well acquainted with Roland and his impulsive ways: he liked him in spite of his faults as a clerk; otherwise he would never have put up with them. A pleasant smile crossed his lips as he answered; answered in jest.

"You know the old French proverb, I dare say, Mr. Yorke: 'Qui s'excuse s'accuse'?"

Roland made nothing of French at the best of times: at such as these, every pulse within him agitated to pain, it was about as intelligible as Hebrew. But, had he understood every word of the joking implication, he could not have responded with more passionate earnestness.

"I did not touch the cheque, sir; I swear it. I never saw it after you took it from this room, or knew where you put it, or anything. It never once came into my thoughts."

"But why do you trouble yourself to say this?" asked Mr. Bede Greatorex, speaking seriously when he noticed the anxious tone, the emotion accompanying the denial. "No one thought of supposing you had taken it."

"Hurst did, sir. He accused me."

Hurst, in his vexation, pushed his work from him in a heap. Of all living mortals, surely Roland was the simplest! he had no more tact than a child. Mr. Bede Greatorex looked from one to the other.

"I did nothing of the kind," said Hurst, speaking quietly. "The fact is, Roland Yorke can't take a joke. When he made that remark about his uncle, Sir Richard, I said to him 'Did you take the cheque?' speaking in jest of course; and he caught up the question as serious."

"There, go to your place, Mr. Yorke," said Bede.

"I'd not do such a thing as touch a cheque for the world; or any other money that was not mine: no, not though it did belong to old Dick Yorke," earnestly reiterated Roland, keeping his ground.

"Of course you would not. Don't be foolish, Mr. Yorke."

"You believe me, I hope, sir."

"Certainly. Do go to your desk. I am busy."

Roland went back to it now, his face brighter. And Bede Greatorex,

thought with a smile how like a boy he was, in spite of his eight-and-twenty years, and his travels in Port Natal. These single-minded natures never grow old, or wise in the world's ways.

Another minute, and a stranger had entered the office. And yet, not quite a stranger; for Bede Greatorex had seen him some few years before, and Hurst and Roland Yorke knew him at once. It was Mr. Butterby; more wiry than he used to be, more observant about the keen eyes. He had come in reference to the loss of the cheque, and saluted Mr. Bede Greatorex: who looked surprised and not best pleased to see him. Jelf, the officer expected, was a man in whom Bede had confidence; of this one's skill he knew nothing.

"It was Sergeant Jelf whom we desired to see," said Bede, speaking with curt sharpness.

"It was," amicably replied Mr. Butterby. "Jelf got a telegram this morning, and had to go off unexpectedly. I'm taking his place for a bit."

"Have you changed your abode from Helstonleigh to London?"

"Only temporary. My head-quarters is always at Helstonleigh. And now about this matter, Mr. Bede Greatorex?"

"I think we need not trouble you. It can wait until Sergeant Jelf returns."

"It might have to wait some time then," was Mr. Butterby's answer. "Jelf is off to Rooshia first; St. Petersburgh; and it's hard to say how long he'll stay there or where he may have to go to next. It's all right, sir: I've been for this ten minutes with Mr. Greatorex, have learnt the particulars of the case, and got his instructions."

Bede Greatorex bit his lip. This man, associated in his mind with that past trouble, the death of John Ollivera, who had been so dear to him, who was so bitterly regretted still, was rather distasteful to Bede than otherwise, and for certain other reasons he would have preferred Jelf. There seemed however no help for it, as his father had given the man his instructions.

Mr. Butterby turned his attention on the clerks. As a preliminary step to proceedings, he peered at them one by one under his eyebrows, while apparently studying the maps on the walls. Hurst favoured him with a civil nod.

"How d'ye do, Butterby?" said Roland Yorke. "You don't get much fatter, Butterby."

Mr. Butterby's answer to this was to stare at Roland for a full minute; as if he could not believe his own eyes at seeing him there.

"I beg to state that I have full confidence in all my clerks," interposed Mr. Bede Greatorex.

"Just so," acquiesced the detective. "Mr. Greatorex senior thinks the same. But it is requisite that I should put a few questions to them, for all that. I can't see my way clear until I shall have ascertained the

movements of every individual clerk this house employs, from the time the cheque was put into your desk yesterday, sir. And I mean to do it," he concluded with equable composure.

He was proceeding to examine the clerks, holding a worn note-book in his hand to pencil down any answer that might strike him, when Bede Greatorex again interposed, conscious that this might be looked upon by some of them as an unpardonable indignity.

"I cannot think this necessary, Mr. Butterby. We place every confidence in our clerks; I repeat it emphatically. Mr. Brown and Mr. Jenner have been with me for some years now; Mr. Hurst and Mr. Yorke are gentlemen."

"I know who they two are; knew them long before you did, sir; and their fathers too. Dr. Yorke, the late prebendary, put some business into my hands once. But now, just leave this matter with me, Mr. Bede Greatorex. Your father has done me the honour to leave it in my hands; and, excuse me for saying it, so must you. All these four, now present to hear you mention their names with respect, understand just as well that what I do is an ordinary matter of form the law's officers require to be gone through, as if I paid 'em the compliment to say so."

"Oh, very well," said Bede, acquiescing more cheerfully. "Step in to my private room with me for a moment first, Mr. Butterby."

He held the door open as he spoke; but, before the officer could turn to it, Mr. Greatorex came in. Bede shut the door again, and nodded to Mr. Butterby as much as to say "Never mind now."

And so the questioning of the clerks began. Mr. Greatorex stayed for a short while to listen to it, and talked to them all in a friendly manner, as if to show that the procedure was not instituted in consequence of any particular suspicion, rather as an investigation in which the house, masters and clerks, were alike interested. The head-clerk went on with his work during the investigation as calmly as if Mr. Butterby had been a simple client; the questions put to him, as to his own movements on the previous day, he answered quietly, calmly, and satisfactorily. Roland never wrote a single line during the whole time; he did nothing but stare; and made comments with his usual freedom. When his turn came to receive the officer's polite attention, he exploded a little and gave very insolent retorts, out of what Mr. Butterby saw was sheer contrariness.

The inquiry narrowed itself to this side of the house; the rest of the clerks being able to prove, individually, that they had not been near Mr. Bede's room during the suspicious hours on the previous day. Whereas it appeared, after some considerable sifting, that each one of these four could have entered it at will, and unseen. What with the intervening dinner-hour, and sundry out-door commissions, every one of them had been left alone in the office separately for a greater or less

period of time. It also came out that, with the exception of Jenner, each had been away from the office quite long enough to go to the bank with the cheque, or to send it and secure the money. Roland Yorke, taking French leave, had stayed a good hour and quarter at his dinner, having gone to it at a quarter past one. Mr. Brown had been out on business for the house from one till half past two ; and Mr. Hurst, who went to the stamp office, was away nearly as long. In point of fact, the chief office-keeper had been little Jenner, who came back from dinner at half past one.

"And now," said the detective, after putting up the pocket-book, in which he had pencilled various of the above items of intelligence, "I should like to get a look at this desk of yours, Mr. Bede Greatorex."

Bede led the way to his room and shut himself in with the detective. While apparently taking no notice whatever of the questions put to his clerks, keeping his head bent over some papers, as if his very life depended on their perusal, he had in reality listened keenly to the answers of all. Handing over the key of his table-desk, he allowed the officer to examine it at will, and waited. He then sat down in his own handsome chair of green patent leather and motioned the other to a seat opposite.

"Mr. Butterby, I do not wish any further stir made in this business."

Had Mr. Butterby received a cannon-ball on his head he could scarcely have experienced a greater shock of surprise, and for once made no reply. Bede Greatorex calmly repeated his injunction, in answer to the perplexed gaze cast on him. He wished nothing more done in the matter.

"What on earth for ?" cried Mr. Butterby.

"I shall have to repose some confidence in you," pursued Mr. Bede Greatorex. "It will be safe, I presume?"

Butterby quite laughed at the question. Safe ! With him ! It certainly would be. If the world only knew the secrets he held in his bosom !

"And yet I can but trust you partially," resumed Bede Greatorex. "Not for my own sake ; I have nothing to conceal, and should like things fully investigated ; but for the sake of my father and family generally. Up to early post-time this morning I was more anxious for Jelf, that he might take the loss in hand, than even my father was."

Bede Greatorex paused. But there came no answering remark from his attentive listener, and he went on again.

"I received a private note by this morning's post which altered the aspect of things, and gave me a clue to the real taker of the cheque. Only a very faint clue : a suspicion rather ; and, that, vague and uncertain : but enough to cause me, in the doubt, to let the matter drop. In fact there is no choice left for me. We must put up with the loss of the money."

Mr. Butterby sat with his hands on his knees, a favourite attitude of his ; his head bent a little forwards, his eyes fixed on the speaker.

"I don't quite take you, Mr. Greatorex," said he. "You must speak out more plainly."

Bede Greatorex paused in hesitation. This communication was distasteful, however necessary he might deem it, and he felt afraid of letting a dangerous word slip inadvertently.

"The letter was obscure," he slowly said, "but, if I understand it aright, the proceeds of the cheque have found their way into the hands of one whom neither my father nor I would prosecute. To do so would bring great pain upon us both, perhaps injury. The pain to my father would be such that I dare not show him the letter, or tell him I have received it. For his sake, Mr. Butterby, you and I must both hush the matter up."

Mr. Butterby felt very much at sea. A silent man by nature and habit, he sat still yet, and listened for more.

"There will be no difficulty, I presume?"

"Let us understand each other, sir. If I take your meaning correctly, it is this. Somebody is mixed up in the affair whose name it won't do to bring to light. One of the family I suppose?"

Mr. Butterby had to wait for an answer. Bede Greatorex paused ere he gave it.

"If not an actual member of the family, it is one so nearly connected with it, that he may almost be called such."

"It's a man, then?"

"It is a man. Will you work with me in this, so as to keep suspicion from my father? Tacitly let him think you are doing what you can to investigate the affair. When no result is brought forth, he will suppose you have been unsuccessful."

"Of course, sir, if you tell me I am not to go on with it, why I won't, and it is at an end. Law bless me! Lots of things are put into our hands one day; and, the next, the family comes and says, Hush 'em up."

"So far good, Mr. Butterby. But now, I wish you, for my own satisfaction, to make some private investigation into it. Quite secretly, you understand: and if you can learn anything as to the thief, bring the news quietly to me."

Mr. Butterby thought this was about as complete a contradiction to what had gone before as it had been ever his lot to hear. He took refuge in his silent gaze and waited. Bede Greatorex put his elbow on the table and his hand to his head as he spoke.

"If I were able to confide to you the whole case, Mr. Butterby, you would see how entirely it is encompassed with doubts and difficulties. I have reason to fancy that the purloiner of the cheque out of this desk must have been one of the clerks in my room. I think this for two

reasons ; one is, that I don't see how anybody else could have had access to it."

"But, sir, you stood it out to their faces just now that you did *not* suspect them."

"Because it will not do for them to know that I do. I assure you, Mr. Butterby, this is a most delicate and dangerous affair. I wish to my heart it had never happened."

"Do you mean that the clerk, in taking it—if he did take it—was acting as the agent of some other party?"

Bede Greatorex nodded. "Yes, only that."

"But *that's* enough to transport him, you know," cried Mr. Butterby, slightly losing the drift of the argument.

"If we could bring him to book, yes. But that must not be done. I *don't* see who else it could have been," added Bede, communing with himself rather than addressing Mr. Butterby, and his face wore a strangely perplexed look.

"Could any of the household, the maid-servants, for instance, get into this here room?" asked Mr. Butterby.

"There's not one of them would dare to risk it in the day-time. They are in the other house. No, no; I fear we must look to one of the young men in the next room."

Mr. Butterby nodded with satisfaction : matters seemed to be taking a more reasonable turn.

"Let's see ; there's four of them," he began, beginning to tell the clerks off on his fingers. "The manager, Brown, confidential, you said—"

"I did not say confidential," interrupted Bede Greatorex. "I said we placed great confidence in him. There's a distinction, Mr. Butterby."

"Then there's the little man, Jenner ; and the others, Hurst and Yorke. Have you any doubt yourself as to any one of them?" quickly asked Mr. Butterby, looking full at the lawyer.

Bede Greatorex hesitated. "I cannot say I have. It would be so wrong, you know, to cast a doubt on either, when there is not sufficient cause ; nothing but what may be a passing, foundationless fancy."

"Speak out, Mr. Bede Greatorex. It's all in the day's work. If there is really nothing, it won't hurt him ; if there is, I may be able to follow it up. Perhaps it's one of the two gentlemen?"

"If it be any one of the four. Mr. Hurst."

The detective so far forgot his good manners as to break into a low whistle.

"Mr. Hurst ! or Mr. Yorke, do you mean?" he cried, in his surprise.

"Not Mr. Yorke, certainly. Why should you think of him?"

"Oh, for nothing," carelessly answered Butterby. "Hurst seems an upright young man, sir."

"It is so trifling a doubt I have of him, the lifting of a straw, as may be said, that I should be sorry to think he is not upright. Still I have a reason for deciding that he is the most likely of the four for doubt to attach to."

At that moment, the gentleman in question interrupted them—Josiah Hurst; bringing a message to Mr. Bede Greatorex. An important client was waiting to see him. Mr. Butterby took a more curious look at the young man's countenance than he had ever done in the old days at Helstoneleigh.

"The lawyer's wrong," thought he to himself. "He is no thiever of cheques, he isn't."

"I shall be at liberty in one minute, Mr. Hurst. Shut the door. You understand?" he added in a low tone to the detective, as they stood up together in parting. "All that I have said to you must be kept secret; doubly secret from my father. He must suppose you at work, investigating, whereas, in point of fact, *the thing must drop*. Only, if you can gain any private information, bring it to me."

Mr. Butterby answered by one of his emphatic nods. "You see there's nothing come up yet about that other thing," he said.

"What other thing?"

"The death of Mr. Ollivera."

"And not likely to," returned Bede Greatorex. "That was over and done with at the time."

"Just my opinion," said the detective. "Jenner was his clerk in chambers."

"Yes. A faithful little fellow."

"Looks it. Who's the other one—Mr. Brown?"

"I can only tell you that he is Mr. Brown; I know nothing of his family. We have had him three or four years."

"Had a good character with him, I suppose? Knew where he'd been, and all that?"

"Undoubtedly. My father is particular. Why do you ask?"

"Only because he is the only one in your room that I don't know something of. Good morning, Mr. Bede Greatorex."

Bede shut the door, and Mr. Butterby walked away, observing things indoors and out with a keen eye, while he ruminated on what he had heard. Sundry reports, connected with the domestic life of Bede Greatorex, were familiar to his comprehensive ears.

"It's a rum go, this," quoth he, making his comments. "He meant his wife, he did; I'd a great mind to say so. Hush it up? of course they must. And Madam keeps the forty-four pounds. But now—does he suspect it might have been one of the clerks helped her to it, or was it only a genteel way of stopping my questions as to how the 'member of the family' could have got indoors to the desk? She grabbed his key, she did, and took out the cheque herself: leastways I should say

so. Stop a bit, though. Who cashed it at the bank? Perhaps one of 'em did help her. 'Twasn't Hurst I know; nor little Jenner, either. Don't think it was young Yorke, in spite of that old affair at Galloway's. T'other, Brown, I don't know. Any way," concluded Mr. Butterby, his thoughts recurring to Bede Greatorex and his wife, "he has got his torment in her; and he shows it. Never saw a man so altered in all my life: looks, spirits, manners: it's just as though there was a blight upon him."

That the presence of the police-agent in the office had not been agreeable to the clerks, will be readily understood. It had to be accepted for an evil; as other evils must be for which there is no help. Roland Yorke felt inclined to resent it openly, and thought the fates were against him still, as they had been at Port Natal. What with that unlucky question of Hurst's and the appearance of Butterby on the scene, both recalling the miserable escapade of years ago that he would give all the world to forget, Roland, alike hot-headed and hot-hearted, was in a state of mind to do any mad thing that came uppermost. And the morning wore away.

"Why don't you go to dinner, Mr. Yorke?"

The question came from the manager. Roland in his perplexity of mind and feelings, had unconsciously let the usual time slip by. Catching up his hat, he tore through the street at speed until he reached the bank. Into which he went with a burst.

"I want to see one of the principals."

What with the haste, the imperative demand, and the imposing stature and air, Roland was at once attended to, and a gentleman, nearly as little as Jenner, came forward.

"Look here," said Roland. "Just you bring me face to face with the fellow who cashed that cheque yesterday. The clerk, you know."

"Which cheque?" came the very natural question from the little gentleman, as he gazed at the applicant.

"The one there's all this shindy over at Greatorex and Greatorex's. Drawn out in favour of old Dick Yorke."

Of course it was not precisely the way to go about things. Before Roland's request was complied with, a little information was requested as to what his business might be, and who he was.

"I am Mr. Roland Yorke."

"Any relation to Sir Richard Yorke?"

"His nephew by blood; none at all by friendliness. Old Dick—but never mind him now. If you'll let me see the clerk, sir, you will hear what I want with him."

The clerk, standing at elbow behind the counter, had heard the colloquy. Roland dashed up to him so impulsively that the little gentleman could with difficulty keep pace.

"Now then," began Roland to the wondering clerk. "Look at me. Look well. Am I the man who presented that cheque yesterday?"

"No, sir, certainly not," was the clerk's reply. "There's not the least resemblance."

"Very good," said Roland, a little calming down from his fierceness. "I thought it well to come and let you see me; that's all."

"But why so?" asked the principal, thinking Sir Richard Yorke's nephew, though a fine man, must be rather an eccentric one.

"Why! why, because I am in Bede Greatorex's office, and we've had a policeman amongst us this morning, looking us up. They say the cheque was brought here by a tall fellow with black whiskers. As that description applies to me, and to none of the others, I thought I'd come and let you see me. That's all. Good morning."

Dashing out in the same commotion that he had entered, Roland, still neglecting his dinner, went skimming back to the house of Greatorex and Greatorex. Not to enter the office, but to pay a visit to Mrs. Bede's side of it.

Not very long before this hour, Mr. Bede Greatorex, all the cares of his business on his shoulders, not the least of them (taking it in all its relations) being the new one connected with the abstracted cheque, went up stairs for luncheon and a few minutes' relaxation. He found his wife full of *her* cares. Mrs. Bede Greatorex had cards out for that afternoon, bidding the great world to a Kettle-drum; and she was calculating what quantity of ices and strawberries to order in, with sundry other momentous questions.

The rooms were turned upside-down. A vast crowd was expected, and small articles of impeding furniture, holding fragile ornaments, were being put out of the way, lest they should come to grief in the turmoil.

"Yes, that quantity of ice will be sufficient; and be sure take care that you have an abundance of strawberries," concluded Mrs. Bede Greatorex to the attendant, who had been receiving her orders. "Chocolate? Of course. Where's the use of asking senseless questions?

Bede," she added, seeing her husband standing there, "I know how you detest the smell of chocolate, saying it makes you as sick as a dog and brings on headaches; but I cannot dispense with it in my rooms. Other people give it, and so must I."

"Give what you like," he said wearily. "What is it you are going to hold? A ball?"

"A ball in the afternoon! Well done, Bede! It's a drum."

"The house is never free from disturbance, Louisa," he rejoined, as a man pushed by with a table.

"You should let me live away from it. And then you'd not smell the chocolate. And the doors would not be impeded for ever with carriages, as you grumble they are. With a house in Hyde Park——"

"Hush!" said Bede in a whisper. "What did I tell you the other

day?—that our expenses are so large, I could not live elsewhere if I would. Don't wear me out with this everlasting theme, Louisa."

It was not precisely the hearth for a man, oppressed with the world's troubles, to find refuge in; neither was she the wife. Bede sighed in very weariness, and turned to go away, thinking how welcome to him, if he could but get transplanted to it, would be the corner of some far-off desert, never before trodden by the foot of man.

A great noise on the stairs; as if a coach-and-six were coming up in fierce commotion; followed by a smart knocking at the room door. Bede turned to escape, thinking it might possibly be the advance guard of the Drum. Nobody but Mr. Roland Yorke. And Roland (who had come up on a vain search after Miss Channing) seeing his master there, at once began to tell of where he had just been and for what purpose. To keep his own counsel on any matter whatever, would have been extremely difficult to Roland.

"It is said, you know, Mr. Bede Greatorex, that the man who cashed the cheque and got the money, was a tall fellow with black whiskers; so I thought it well to go and show myself. I am tall," drawing up his head; "I've got black whiskers," pushing one side forward with his hand; "and nobody else in your room answered to the description."

"It was very unnecessary, Mr. Yorke. You were in Port Natal."

"In Port Natal!" echoed Roland, staring. "What has Port Natal to do with this?"

Bede Greatorex slightly laughed. In his self-absorption, he had suffered his mind to run on other things.

"As to unnecessary—I don't think so, after what that ill-natured Hurst said. And perhaps you'd not, sir, if you knew all," added simple Roland, thinking of Mr. Galloway's bank-note. "Any way, I have been to the bank to show myself."

"What did the bank say to you?" questioned Bede Greatorex, his tone one of light jest.

"The bank said I was not in the least like the fellow; he was tall, but not as tall as me, and they are nearly sure he had a beard as well as whiskers. I thought I'd tell you, sir."

Mrs. Bede Greatorex, listening to this with curious ears, enquired what the trouble was, and heard for the first time of the loss of the cheque, the probable loss of the forty-four pounds. Had Mr. Butterby been present to mark her genuine surprise, he would have put away forever his opinion that she was the recipient alluded to by Bede Greatorex, and perhaps have mentally begged her pardon for the mistaken thought.

"Will you come to my kettle-drum, Mr. Roland?"

"No I won't," said Roland. "Thank you all the same," he added a minute after, as if to atone for the bluntness of the reply. "I've been put out to-day uncommonly, Mrs. Bede Greatorex; and when a fellow is, he does not care for drums and kettles."

However, when the Kettle-drum was in full swing about five o'clock in the afternoon, and the stairs were crowded with talkers and trains, Roland, thinking better of it, elbowed his way up amidst. People who did not know him, thought he must be from the Court at least; the Lord Chamberlain, or some such great man; for Roland had a way of holding his own and tacitly asserting himself, like nobody else. He caught sight of Gerald, who averted his head at once; he saw Mrs. Hamish Channing, and she was the only guest he talked to. Roland was again looking for Annabel. He found her presently in the refreshment room, seeing that Miss Jane did not make herself ill with strawberries and cream.

Into her ear, very much as though it had been a rock of refuge, Roland confided his wrongs: Mr. Hurst's semi-accusation of him in regard to the loss, his errand to the bank, and in short all the events of the morning.

"I couldn't have done it by *him*," said Roland. "Had he made a fool of himself when he was young and wicked, I could no more have flung it in his teeth in after-years, to twist his feelings, than I could twist yours, Annabel. When I've been repenting of the mad act ever since, never going to my bed at night or rising in the morning, without thinking of it and—dashing it: but I was going to say another word: and hoping and planning how best to recompense every soul that suffered by it! It was too bad of him."

"Yes it was," warmly answered Annabel, her cheeks flushing with the earnestness of her sympathy. "Roland, I never liked that Josiah Hurst."

CHAPTER XIV.

GERALD YORKE IN A DILEMMA.

MR. GERALD YORKE stood in his chambers—as he was pleased to style the luxurious rooms he occupied in a most fashionable quarter of London. Gerald liked both luxury and fashion, and went in for both. He was occupied very much as Mrs. Bede Greatorex had been earlier in the day—namely, casting a glance round his rooms, and the supplies of good things just brought into them. For Gerald was to give a wine and supper party that night.

Running counter to the career planned for him—the Church—Gerald had embarked on one of his own choosing. He determined to be a public man; and had private ambitious visions of a future premiership. He came to London, got introductions through his family connections, and hoped to be promoted to some government appointment to start with. As a preliminary step, he plunged into society and high

living ; going out amidst the great world and receiving men in return. This requires some amount of cash, as everybody who has tried it knows, however unlimited the general credit may be ; and Gerald Yorke laboured under the drawback of possessing none. A handsome present from Lord Carrick when his lordship was in funds, or a five-pound note screwed out of his mother's shallow purse, constituted his resources. So Gerald did as a vast many more do—he took to writing as a temporary means of living. Of genius he had none ; but after a little practice he became a sufficiently ready writer. He tried political articles, he wrote short stories for periodicals, he obtained a post on one or two good papers as a reviewer. Gerald liked to review works of fiction best : they gave him the least trouble ; and no one could cut and slash a rival's book to shreds more effectively than he. Friendly with a great many of the literary world and with men belonging to the press, Gerald found plenty of work put into his hands, for which he was well paid. At last he began to try his hand at a book himself. If he could only get through it, he thought, and it made a hit, and brought him back money, what a glorious thing it would be !

As the time went on, so did Gerald's hopes. The book progressed towards completion (in spite of sundry stumbling-blocks, where he had seemed stuck), and success, with its attendant golden harvest, drew almost as near to his view, as its necessity was in reality. For the ready money earned by his stray papers and reviews was verily but as a drop of water in the great ocean of Gerald's needs.

Look at him as he stands there with his back to the fire-place ; the tall, fine man in his evening dress. But there is a savage frown of perplexity and temper on his generally cynical face, for something has occurred to annoy him.

And yet, that had been in its earlier part such a red-lettered day ! In the morning Gerald had put the finishing conclusion to his book and complacently written the title. In the afternoon he had been introduced to a great literary don at Mrs. Bede Greatorex's drum, who might prove of use in the future. Calling in later upon a friend, he had taken some dinner with him, and then returned home and dressed for the opera, his supper guests being bidden for twelve o'clock. He was just going out on his way to it, when two letters met his eye, which he had overlooked on entering. The one, he saw, was in the handwriting of a creditor who was becoming troublesome ; the other in that of his wife and marked "Immediate."

Gerald Yorke had been guilty of one imprudent act, for which there was no cure. When only twenty-one, he had married. The young lady, Winnifred Eales, was of no family, so to say, and did not possess a fraction. Gerald was taken by her pretty face, and was foolish enough to marry her off-hand ; saddling himself with a wife without having the wherewithal to keep one. Little did Gerald Yorke's acquaintances

in London suspect that the fast and fashionable young man (only in his twenty-sixth year now, though looking older) had a wife and three children! Had the question been put to Gerald "Are you married?" he would have briefly acknowledged it; but he never volunteered the information. His wife was his wife; he did not wish to repudiate either her or the children; but he had long ago found them an awful incumbrance, and kept them in the background. To do so was less cost. Had Gerald come into two or three thousand a year, he would have set up his tent grandly, have had his family home to it forthwith, and introduced them to the world: until that desirable time should arrive, he had meant them to remain in the little country cottage-home in Gloucestershire, where he had placed them, and where they knew nobody. But that his wife was tolerably patient and very persuadable, she would have struck long before. She did grumble; when Gerald visited her she was fretful, tearful, fractious, and complaining. In fact she was little better than a child herself, and not by any means a strong-minded one.

But the crisis had come. Gerald tore open the letter, with its ominous word *Immediate*, and found unwelcome news. For two or three blissful moments, he did not believe his eyesight, and then the letter was dashed down in vehement passion.

"Winny's mad!"

Winny (as Gerald's wife was generally called) tired of her lonely home, of the monotonous care of her children, tired above all of waiting month after month, year after year, for the fulfilment of his promises to put matters upon a more satisfactory footing, had taken the initiative into her own hands. She informed her husband that she had given up the cottage, sold off its furniture by auction, and should arrive with the children in London (Paddington terminus) at three o'clock the next day, where he must meet her if he could: if not, they should drive at once to him at his chambers, or to the Young England Club. A slight concluding hint was annexed that he need not attempt to stop her by telegraph, for the telegraph people had got orders not to bring her up any messages that might arrive.

A pretty announcement, that, for a man in society to get! Gerald stood very much as if he had received a blow that blinded him. *What* was he to do with them when they came? Never in all his life had he been so pushed into a corner. The clock went ticking on, on; but Gerald did not heed it.

His servant came in, under pretence of bringing a dish of fruit, and ventured to remind him of the engagement at the opera, truly thinking his master must have forgotten it. Gerald sent the opera very far away, and ordered the man to shut the door.

In truth he was in no mood for the opera now. Had there been a possibility of doing it, he would have put off his supper-party. The other letter, which he opened in a kind of desperation, contained

threats of unpleasant proceedings, unless a debt, long sued for, was paid within twenty-four hours. Money, Gerald must have, and he did not know where to get it. His literary pay had been forestalled wherever it could be. He had that day applied to young Richard Yorke (or Vincent, as Gerald generally called him, being the finer name of his cousin's two baptismal ones) for a loan, and been refused. Apart from the future difficulties connected with Winny and the children, it would take some cash in pocket to establish them in lodgings.

"Winny wants a good shaking for causing me this trouble," earnestly soliloquised Gerald in his dilemma, that fashionable drawl of his, kept for the world, not being discernible in private life. "Suppose she should turn restive, and insist on coming *here*? Good heavens! a silly, untidy wife, and three ill-kept children!"

He walked to the side-board, dashed out a glass of some cordial with his shaking hand, and drank it, for the picture unnerved him.

"If I could get my book accepted by a publisher, and an advance made upon it," thought Gerald, resuming his place on the hearth-rug, "I might get along. Some of those confounded publishers are so independent; they'll keep a manuscript for twelve months and never look at it."

A short while before this, Gerald had tried his hand at a play, which ill-natured managers had hitherto refused to accept. Gerald of course thought the refusal arose from nothing but prejudice, as some others do in similar cases. He went on with his soliloquy.

"I think I'll get some fellow to look over my novel and give me an opinion upon it—which I can repeat over to a publisher. Write it down if necessary. That's what I ought to have done by the drama: one is apt to be overlooked in these days without a special recommendation. Let's see? Who is there? Hamish Channing. Nobody so good. His capabilities are first-rate, and I'll make him read it at once. If Vincent Yorke——"

The soliloquy was brought to a stand-still. Some commotion outside, as if a visitor had sought to enter and was stopped, caught Gerald's startled ear; but he knew his servant was trustworthy. The next moment the door opened, and the man spoke.

"Mr. Yorke, sir."

Who should walk in with his usual disregard to the exigencies of ceremonious life, but Roland! Gerald stared in utter astonishment; and, when satisfied that it was in truth his brother, frowned awfully. Gerald in his high sphere might find it difficult to get along; but to have an elder brother who was so down in the world as to accept any common employment offered, and put up with one room and a turn-up bedstead, and not scruple to own it, was a very different matter. And Gerald's intention was to wash his hands of Roland and his low surroundings, as entirely as Sir Richard Yorke could do.

Roland took a survey of things in general, and saluted his brother with off-hand cordiality. He knew his presence there was unacceptable, but in his good-nature would not appear to remember it. The handsome rooms, lacking no signs of wealth and comfort, the preparations for the entertainment that peeped out here and there, Gerald himself (as Roland would have expressed it) in full fig; all seemed to denote that life was sunny in this quarter, and Roland thought it was fine to be Gerald.

Gerald slowly extended one unwilling finger in response to Roland's offered grasp, and waited for him to explain his business, not inviting him to sit. It was not he that would allow Roland to think he might be a visitor there at will. Roland, however, put himself into a comfortable velvet lounging-chair of his own accord, as easily as he might have put himself into the old horsehair thing at Mrs. Jones's: and then proceeded to tell his errand.

It was this. Upon going home that night at seven—for he had to stay late in the office to make up for the time lost at Mrs. Bede's kettle-drum—Roland found a letter from Lord Carrick; who was in the shade still. Amidst some personal matters, it contained a confidential message for Gerald, which Roland was charged to deliver in person. This was no other than a reminder to Gerald that a certain pecuniary obligation for which he and Lord Carrick were equally responsible (the latter having made himself so, to accommodate Gerald, but receiving no benefit) was becoming due, and that Gerald would have to meet it. "Tell him, my boy, that I'd willingly find the means for him if I could, and as much more at the back of it," wrote the good-natured peer; "but I'm regularly out of every thing for the time being, and *can't*."

It may be easily conceived that the errand, when explained, did not tend to increase Roland's welcome. Gerald bit his full lips with suppressed passion, and could willingly have struck his brother. Vincent Yorke, perhaps as an ostensible plea for not responding in kind to Gerald's application for the loan of twenty pounds that day, said they might have to lose forty-four, and had disclosed to him the particulars of the appropriated cheque, adding that *he* should think suspicion must lie on some one of the four clerks in Bede Creatorex's office. That was quite enough for Gerald.

In anything but a temperate way he now attacked his brother, not saying, Did you steal the cheque? but accusing him of doing it, and bringing up the old transaction at Mr. Galloway's. There ensued a sharp, short quarrel: which might have been far sharper on Roland's side but for the aspersion already cast on him by Hurst: that seemed to have paved the way for this, and deadened its sting.

"Look here, Gerald," said Roland calming down from anger, but speaking with an emotion at which Gerald stared. "My taking that twenty-pound note from Galloway was an awful mistake; the one great mistake of my life, for I shall never——"

"Call it a theft," roared Gerald.

"For I shall never make such another," went on Roland, just as though he had not heard the interruption. "It will stick to me always more or less, be cropping up everlastinglly; but, for all that, it was the best thing that could have happened to me."

Gerald answered by a sneer.

"It sent me out to Port Natal. I should never have gone but for that, however much I might have talked of it. I wanted to put Arthur Channing straight with the world, and I couldn't stay and face the world while I did it. Well, I went out to Port Natal: and I stayed there, trying to get into funds and come home with some redeeming money in my hand. I stayed long enough to knock out of me a great deal that wanted to come out: idleness, and folly, and senseless pride. I'm not one of the good and brave ones yet, such as Arthur Channing is; but I've learnt at any rate to do a little for myself and be tolerant to others; I've learned not to be ashamed to work honestly for my bread before eating it. There."

"The sooner you take yourself out of here, the better," said Gerald. "I am expecting friends."

"Don't fancy I'm going to wait till they come; I'd not intrude on either you or them," retorted Roland, turning to depart. "I came up on your business, Gerald, to-night, to oblige Carrick; but I shall tell him to choose somebody else for a messenger if he wants to send again. Good night."

Gerald gave no answer. Unless the banging-to the door after Roland with his foot could be called one.

He stood ruminating for a short while alone. The message certainly tended to a further complication of Gerald's perplexities. Although he had originally assured Lord Carrick that he should not look to him to meet the bill, he really had done so: for nobody looked in vain to that imprudent and good-hearted man, when he had it in his power to help.

"There's nothing for it but the novel," decided Gerald presently. "What's the time?"

Glancing over his shoulder, he saw that it was not yet half past nine. As his guests would not arrive until twelve, there was time, and to spare, for a visit to Hamish Channing. So, packing up his manuscript, he went forth.

Hamish sat in his writing-room as usual this evening, working closely. His face wore a weary look as the light from the candle, the shade temporarily removed, fell upon it. Ever good-humoured, ever full of sweet hope, of loving-kindness to the whole world, he cared not for his weariness; nay, was not conscious of it.

An arrival at the street-door, and a bustle in the next room following close upon it; a child's joyous laughter and light chatter. Hamish

knew the cause. Little Miss Nelly had returned home from a child's party, her hands laden with fairy gifts. In she came; papa could not keep the door quite closed from her; in her white muslin frock with the broad blue sash and sleeve ribbons, and the bit of narrow blue on her neck, suspending the locket with Grandpapa Channing's likeness in it. Hamish caught up the lovely little vision and began fondling it; kissing the bright cheeks, the chattering lips, the pretty neck.

"And now Nelly must go," he said, "for I have my work to do."

"A great great deal of work?"

"Oceans of it, Nelly."

"Mamma says you work too much," returned Nelly, looking full at him with her brilliant, sweet blue eyes, so like his own.

"Tell mamma I say she knows nothing about it."

"Jane Greatorex was there, papa, and Aunt Annabel. She told me to tell you, too, not to work so much."

"Jane Greatorex did?"

"Now papa, you know! Annabel."

"We'll have mamma and Annabel taken up for conspiracy. Good night, my little treasure: I'd keep you here always if I could."

"Let me say my prayers to you to-night, papa," whispered the child. He was about to say no, but seemed to change his mind, and quitted the chair at the writing-table for another. Then Nelly, throwing all her gifts on the table in a heap, knelt down and put up her hands to say her prayers. When she had concluded them, he did not let her rise, but laid his hand upon her head and kept it there in silence, as if praying himself. And Nelly went out with some awe, for papa's eyes looked as if they had tears in them.

Hamish had settled to work again and Nelly would be a myth until the next morning, when Gerald Yorke arrived, dashing up in a hansom. He came in to Hamish at once, carrying his manuscript.

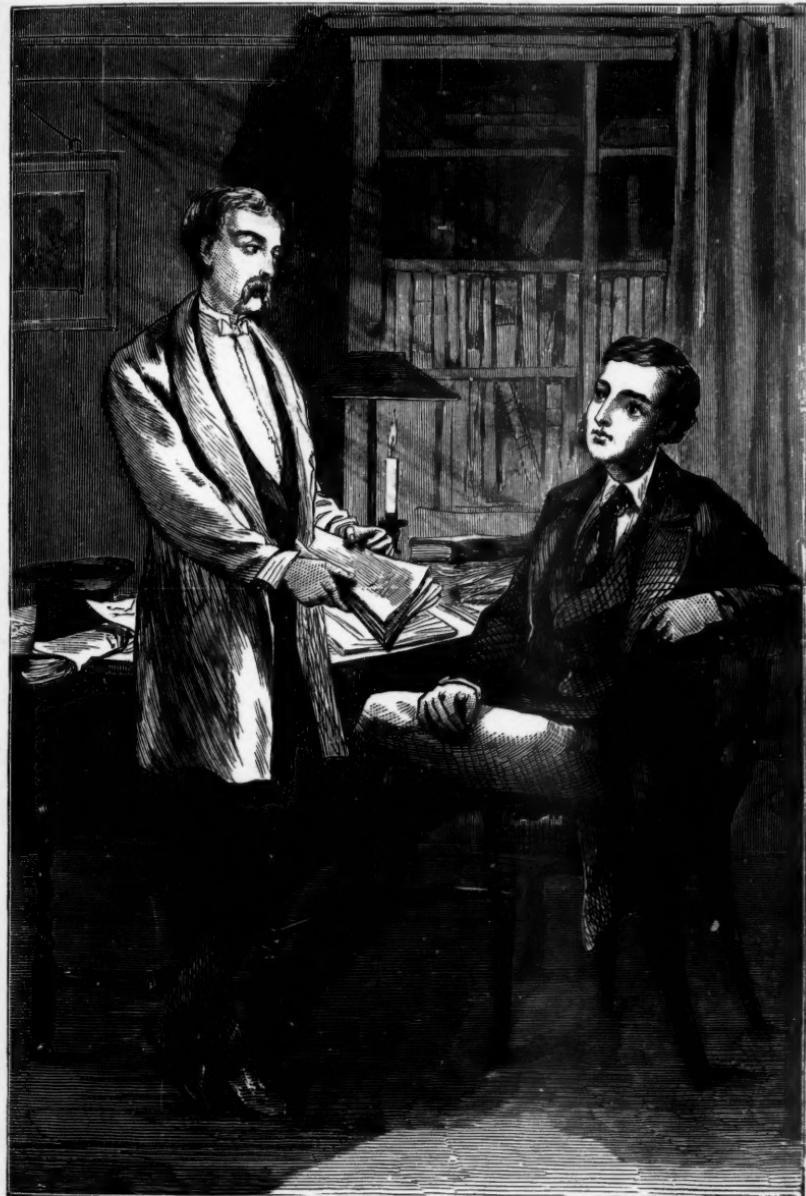
"You'll do me a favour, won't you, old friend?"

"What is it?" asked Hamish, the sunny smile on his face already an earnest of compliance. And Gerald undid his manuscript.

"I want you to read this; to go over it carefully and attentively; and then give me your opinion of it. I thought once of asking Caustic, but your judgment is worth more than his, because I know you'll give a true report."

Gerald had either been in too great haste to make a fair copy for the press, or else had deemed that point superfluous. As Hamish caught sight of the blurred and blotted lines in Gerald's notably illegible hand, he hesitated. He was so *full* of work, and this would be in truth a task. Only for the tenth part of a moment, however; he could sit up at night and get through it.

"At once," said Gerald. "If you could put away your own work for it, I should be obliged; I have a reason for wishing to get it back



Gerald Yorke asks a favour of Hamish Channing.

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directly. And Hamish, you'll mind and give me your real opinion in strict candour."

"Do you say that seriously?" asked Hamish, his tone one of grave meaning.

"Of course I do. Or why should I ask you to read it all?"

"Not very long ago, a friend brought me a work he had written, begging me to look over it and tell him what I thought of it without disguise or flattery, just as you do now," spoke Hamish. "Well, I thought he meant it, and did as he requested. Above all, he had said, point out to me the faults. I did point out the faults. I told him my opinion candidly and kindly, and it was not favourable. Gerald, I lost my friend from that hour."

Gerald laughed. The cases, he thought, were totally dissimilar. Had an angel from Heaven come down and said an unfavourable opinion could be pronounced upon this work of his, he had not believed it.

"Don't be afraid, Channing. I shall thank you to give me your true opinion just as though the manuscript belonged to some stranger, who would never know what you said."

"I don't like the title," observed Hamish, accepting the conditions.

"Not like the title?"

"No."

Gerald had called it by a title more wonderful than attractive. The good sense of Hamish Channing discovered the mistake at once.

"We made it up between us one night over our drink; one put in one word and one another," said Gerald, alluding to sundry confrères of his. "After all, Hamish, it's the book that makes the success, not the title."

"But a good book should possess a good title."

"Well, the title can go for now; time enough to alter that later," concluded Gerald, rather testily. "You'll lose no time, Channing."

"No more than I can help. To put all my work away, you must know to be impracticable, Gerald. But I'll make what haste I can."

Hamish went with him to the other room where Mrs. Channing was sitting, and Gerald unbosomed himself to them of his great care; the dilemma which the evening's post had put him in, as to the speedy arrival of his wife.

"What on earth to do, I can't tell," he said with a groan. "Lodgings for a family are not found in an hour: and that's the best thing I can do with them yet awhile. If Winny were not an utter simpleton, she'd at least have given me a clear day's warning. And only look at the impossibility of *my* getting dinner and tea for them, and all the rest of the necessaries. I shan't know how to set about it."

Hamish glanced at his wife and she at him, and they spoke almost simultaneously.

"If you would like to bring them here first, Gerald, do so. You know

we shall be happy to see Winny. It may give you a few hours more to fix on lodgings, and they need not move into them until night."

Gerald twirled his watch-chain as he stood, and did not at once accept. He was looking very cross.

"Thank you," he said at length, but not very graciously, "then they shall come here. I suppose you could not make it convenient to meet them for me at Paddington, Hamish?"

"That I certainly could not," replied Hamish. "You know my hours in the city, Gerald. If you are unable to go yourself, why don't you ask Roland? I don't suppose"—and Hamish broke into a smile—"his services are so valuable to Greatorex and Greatorex that they'd make an objection."

The mention of his brother was enough for Gerald. He called him a few contemptuous names, and went out to the cab, which had waited to drive him back to his chambers, and to the entertaining of his friends. Who arrived in due course, and did not separate too soon.

Hamish finished his own work and then he commenced for Gerald. He sighed a little wearily as he adjusted his light. Ellen thought him long, and came in.

"Not ready yet, Hamish!"

"My darling, I must sit late to-night. I thought you had gone to bed."

"I have been waiting. You said at tea-time you had not so very much to do. It is twelve o'clock. Whatever's that?"

"Gerald Yorke's manuscript. He wants me to read it."

"Hamish! As if you had not too much work of your own!"

"One must do a little kindness now and then," he said cheerfully. "You go on, love. I'll come by-and-by."

It was of no use saying more, as Ellen knew by experience. This was not the first friend's manuscript he had toiled through: and she went up stairs. Hamish glanced at the light, saw that he had another candle in readiness, coughed a little, as he often did now, applied himself closely to his task until three o'clock, and then left off. In heart and mind ever genial, he thought nothing of the extra toil: it was to do a good turn for Gerald. Surely these unselfish, loving natures shall find their deeds recorded on high, and meet with their reward!

He was up with the lark. Six o'clock saw him in his room again, that he might give a few more hours to the manuscript before proceeding to his daily work in the city.

Hamish Channing's was no eye-service, either to heaven or to man.

CHAPTER XV.

VISITORS FOR MRS. JONES.

WHEN the exigencies of a story require that two parts of it should be related at once, the difficulty is, which to take first; or rather which may be delayed with the least inconvenience: and very often, as is the case with other things in life, we choose the wrong.

Mrs. Jones sat in her parlour at the twilight hour; and a very dark twilight too, but light enough for the employment she was so busy over—knitting. Not woollen socks this time, but some complicated affair of silk, more profitable than the stockings. Roland Yorke had just started on that visit, already told of, to Gerald's chambers, after enjoying a sumptuous tea and toasted muffins in Mrs. Jones's parlour, where, for the sake of company, his meals were sometimes taken. Miss Rye was out at work; Mr. Ollivera had an evening service; and so the house was quiet, and Mrs. Jones at leisure to pursue her occupation.

Not for very long. A double knock at the street-door gave forth its echoes, and the servant-maid came in after answering it.

"A gentleman wants to know if there's not a room to let here, ma'am."

Mrs. Jones looked up as if she meant to snap the girl's nose off.
"How should he know any room's to let? There's no bill up."

"I've asked him into Mr. Yorke's parlour," said the girl, aware that it was worse than profitless to contend with her mistress. "He has got spectacles on, and he says his name's Mr. Brown."

Mrs. Jones shook out her gown and went to the visitor: a tall gentleman with those slightly-stained glasses on that are called smoke-coloured. He generally took them off in-doors, wearing them in the street to protect his eyes from the sun, but on this occasion he kept them on. It was the Mr. Brown who belonged to the house of Greatorex and Greatorex; Mrs. Jones had heard his name, but did not know him personally; and he had to introduce himself as well as his business.

Mr. Roland Yorke, in his confidential communications to Josiah Hurst and the office generally, touching other people's concerns as well as his own—for gossiping, as an agreeable interlude to his hard work, still held its sway over Roland—had told of the departure of the scripture reader for another district, and the vacancy in consequence in Mrs. Jones's household. Mr. Brown, listening to all this, but saying nothing, had come to the conclusion that the room might suit himself; hence his visit to-night. He related these particulars quite candidly, and asked to see the room if it were not already let. He should give very little trouble, he said, took nothing at home but his breakfast and tea, and had his boots cleaned out of doors.

Mrs. Jones marshalled him to the room: the back-parlour, as the reader may remember: and the bargain was concluded at once, without a dissentient voice on the stranger's part. Mrs. Jones remembered afterwards

that when she held the candle aloft for him to see its proportions and furniture, he scarcely gave a single glance before saying it would do, and laid the first week's rent down in lieu of references.

"Who asked for references?" tartly demanded Mrs. Jones, not a whit more courteous to him, her lodger in prospective, than she was to others. "Time enough to speak of references when you're told they are wanted. Little Jenner has often talked of you. Take up the money, if you please."

"But I prefer to pay my rent in advance," said Mr. Brown. "It has been my custom to do so where I am."

He spoke decisively, in a tone that admitted of no appeal, and Mrs. Jones caught up the money with a jerk and put it loose in her pocket. Saying he would let her know the time of his entrance, which might probably be on the following evening, he wished her good night, and departed: leaving an impression on his future landlady that his voice was in some way not altogether unfamiliar to her.

"I'm not as 'cute in remembering faces as Alletha is," acknowledged Mrs. Jones to herself, while she watched him down the street from the front door, "but I'll back my ear against hers for voices any day. Not lately; I hardly think that; it's more like a remembrance of the far past. Still, I don't remember his face. Heard him speak perhaps in some railway train; or—Goodness heart alive! Is it you?"

This sudden break was occasioned by the appearance of another gentleman, who seemed to have sprung from nowhere, until he halted close before her. It was the detective officer, Butterby: and Mrs. Jones had not seen him since she quitted her country home.

"I thought it looked like you," cried Mr. Butterby, giving his hand. "Says I to myself as I strolled along, 'If that's not the image of my old friend Mrs. Jones, it's uncommon like her.' It *is* you, ma'am! And how are you? So you are living in this quarter!"

Crafty man! Mrs. Jones had assuredly dealt him a box on the ear could she have divined that he was deceiving her. He had been watching her house for some minutes past, knowing just as well as she did that it was hers. Mrs. Jones invited him indoors, and he went under protest, not wishing he said to intrude: but the going indoors was what he intended doing all along.

They sat gossiping of old times and new. Mr. Butterby took a friendly glass of beer and a biscuit; Mrs. Jones, knitting always, took none. Without seeming to be at all anxious for the information, he had speedily gathered in every particular about Roland Yorke that there was to gather. Not too charitably disposed to the world in general, in speech, at any rate, Mrs. Jones yet spoke well of Roland.

"He is no more like the proud selfish aristocrat he used to be than chalk's like cheese," she said. "In his younger days Roland Yorke thought the world was made for him and his pleasure, no matter who else suffered: he doesn't think it now."

"Sowed his wild oats, has he?" remarked Mr. Butterby.

"For the matter of wild oats, I never knew he had any particular ones to sow," retorted Mrs. Jones. "Whether or not, he has got none left, that I can see."

"Wouldn't help himself to another twenty-pound note," said Mr. Butterby carelessly, stretching out his hand to take a second biscuit.

"No, that he would not," emphatically pronounced Mrs. Jones. "And I know this—that there never was an act repented of as he repents of that. His thoughts are but skin-deep; he's not crafty enough to hide them, and those that run may read. If cutting off his right hand would undo that past act, he'd cut it off and be glad, Mr. Butterby."

"Shouldn't wonder," assented the officer. "Many folks is in the like case. Have you ever come across that Godfrey Pitman?"

"Not I. Have you?"

The officer shook his head. Godfrey Pitman had hitherto remained a dead failure.

"The man was disguised when he was at your house at Helstonleigh, Mrs. Jones, there's no doubt of that; and the fact has made detection difficult, you see."

The assumption, as reflecting disparagement on her and her house, mortally offended Mrs. Jones. She treated Mr. Butterby to a taste of the old tongue he so well remembered, and saw him with the barest civility to the door on his departure. Miss Rye happened to be coming in at the time, and Mr. Butterby regarded her curiously with his green eyes in saluting her. Her face and lips turned white as ashes.

"What brings *him* here?" she asked under her breath, when Mrs. Jones came back to her parlour from shutting the door.

"His pleasure, I suppose," was Mrs. Jones's answer, a great deal too much put out to say that he had come (as she supposed) accidentally. Disguised men lodging in her house, indeed! "What's the matter with *you*?"

Alletha Rye had sat down on the nearest chair, and seemed labouring to get her breath. The ghastly face, the signs of agitation altogether, attracted the notice of Mrs. Jones.

"I have got that stitch in my side again; I walked fast," was all she said. "Did Butterby want anything in particular?"

"No, he did not. He is in London about some business or other, and saw me standing at the door this evening as he passed by. Have you got your work finished?"

"Yes," replied Alletha, beginning to unfasten her mantle and bonnet-strings.

"I've let that back-parlour," remarked Mrs. Jones; "so if there's any of your pieces in the room, the sooner you fetch them out, the better. Brown, the managing clerk to Mr. Bede Greatorex, has taken it."

"Who?" cried Alletha, springing out of her seat.

"It's a good thing there's no nerves in this house; you'd startle them," snapped Mrs. Jones. "What ails you to-night?"

Alletha Rye turned her back, apparently searching for something in the sideboard drawer. Her face was growing paler if possible than before; her fingers shook, the terror in her eyes was all too conspicuous. She was silently striving for composure, and hiding herself while she did so. When it had in a degree come, she faced Mrs. Jones again, who was knitting furiously, and spoke in a quiet tone.

"Who did you say had taken the room, Julia? Mr. Brown? Why should *he* take it?"

"You can go and ask him why."

"I would not let it to him," said Alletha earnestly. "Don't; pray don't."

Down went the knitting with a fling. "Now just you explain yourself, Alletha Rye. What has the man done to you, that you should put in your word against his coming in?"

"Nothing."

"Oh! Then why should he *not* come, pray? His worst enemy can't say he's not respectable—after being for years confidential clerk to Greatorex and Greatorex. Do you hear?—what have you to urge against his coming?"

Alletha Rye was at a loss for an answer. The real reason she dared not give; and it was difficult to invent one. But the taxed brain is wonderfully apt.

"It may not be agreeable to Mr. Yorke."

Mrs. Jones was never nearer going into a real passion: and, in spite of her sharp tongue, passion with her was exceedingly rare. She gave Alletha what she called a taste of her mind; and it was rather a bitter one while it lasted. Mrs. Jones did not drop it easily, and it was she who broke the ensuing silence.

"Don't bring up Mr. Yorke's name under any of your false pretences, Alletha Rye. You have taken some crotchet in your head against the man, though I don't know how or when you can have seen him, just as you did against Parson Ollivera. Any way, I have accepted Brown as tenant, and he comes into possession to-morrow night."

"Then I may as well move my work out at once," said Alletha meekly, taking up a candle.

She went into the back-parlour, and caught hold of an upright piece of furniture, and pressed her aching head upon it as if it were a refuge. The candle remained on the chest of drawers; the work, lying about, was ungathered: but she stood on, moaning out words of distress and despair.

"It is the hand of fate. It is bringing all things and people together in one nucleus; just as it has been working to do since the death of John Ollivera."

But the events of the evening were not entirely over, and a word or two must be yet given to it. There seemed to be nothing but encounters and re-encounters. As Mr. Butterby was walking down the street on his departure, turning his eyes (not his head) from side to side in the quiet manner characteristic of him, observing all, but apparently seeing nothing, though he had no object in view just now, there came up a wayfarer to jostle him; a tall, strong man, who walked as if the street were made for him, and nearly walked over quiet Mr. Butterby.

"Halloo!" cried Roland, for it was nobody else. "It's you, is it? What do you do up here?"

Roland's tone was none of the pleasantest, savouring rather of the haughty assumption of old days. His interview with Gerald, from which he was hastening, had not tended to appease him, and Mr. Butterby was as much his *bête noire* as he had ever been. The officer did not like the tone: he was a greater man than he used to be, having got up some steps in the official world.

"Looking after you, perhaps," retorted Mr. Butterby. "The streets are free for me, I suppose."

"It would not be the first time you had looked after the wrong man. How many innocent people have you taken into custody lately?"

"Now you just keep a civil tongue in your mouth, Mr. Roland Yorke. You'd not like it if I took you."

"I should like it as well as Arthur Channing liked it when you took him," said bold Roland. "There's been a grudge lying on my mind against you ever since that transaction, Butterby, and I promise you I'll pay it off if I get the chance."

"Did you make free with that cheque yesterday, Mr. Yorke—as you did by the other money?" asked Mr. Butterby, slightly exasperated.

"Perhaps I did and perhaps I didn't," said Roland. "Think so, if you like. You are no better than a calf in these matters, you know, Butterby. Poor meek Jenkins, who was too good to stop in the same atmosphere that other folks breathed, was clearer-sighted than you. 'It's Arthur Channing, your worships, and I've took him prisoner to answer for it,' says you to the magistrates. 'It never was Arthur Channing,' says Jenkins, nearly going down on his knees to you in his honest truth. 'Pooh, pooh,' says you, virtuously indignant, 'I know a thief when I see him—'"

"Now I vow, Mr. Roland Yorke——"

"Don't interrupt your betters, Butterby; wait till I've done," cried aggravating Roland, over-bearing the quieter voice. "You took up Arthur Channing, and moved heaven and earth to get him convicted. Had the wise king, Solomon, come express down from the stars on a frosty night, to tell you Arthur was innocent, you'd have pooh-poohed him as

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you did poor Jenkins. But it turned out not to be Arthur, you know, old Butterby; it was me. And now if you think you'd like to go in for the same mistake again, *go* in for it. You would, if you took me up for this second thing."

"I can tell you what, Mr. Roland Yorke—you'd look rather foolish if I walked into Greatorex's office to-morrow morning, and told of that past mistake."

"I don't much care whether you do or don't," said candid Roland. "As good let it come out as not, for somebody or other is always casting it in my teeth. Hurst does; my brother Gerald does—I've come now straight from hearing it. I thought I should have lived that down at Port Natal; but it seems I didn't."

"You'll not live it down by impudence," said Mr. Butterby.

"Then I must live it up," was the retort, "for impudence is a fault of mine. I've heard you say I had enough for the devil. So good-night to you, Butterby. I am to be found at my lodgings, if you'd like to come after me there with a pair of handcuffs."

Roland went striding off, and the officer stood to look after him. In spite of the "impudence" received, a smile crossed his face; it was the same impulsive, careless, boyish Roland Yorke of past days, good-natured under his worst sting. But whatever other impression might have been left upon Mr. Butterby's mind by the encounter, one lay very clear—that it was not Roland who was guilty this time, and he must look elsewhere for the purloiner of the cheque.

CHAPTER XVI.

WINNY.

FIVE minutes past three at the Paddington station, and all the bustle and confusion of a train just in. Gerald Yorke stood on the platform, welcoming a pretty little fair-haired woman, whose pretty doll's face was given to dimple with smiles one minute, and to pout the next. Also three fair-haired children, the eldest three years old, the youngest just able to walk. Mrs. Gerald Yorke was not much better than a child herself. To say the truth, she was somewhat of a doll in intellect as well as face; standing always in awe of big, resolute, clever Gerald, yielding implicitly to his superior will. But for a strong-minded sister, who had loudly rebelled against Winny's wrongs in being condemned to an obscure country cottage while he flourished in high life in London, and who managed privately the removal for her, she had never dared to venture on the step; but this was not to be confessed to her husband. She felt more afraid than ever of the consequences of having made it, now that she saw him face to face.

"How many packages have you, Winny?"

"Nineteen."

"Nineteen!"

"But they are not all large, Gerald. Some of them are small bundles, done up in kitchen towels and pillow-cases."

Gerald bit his lip to avoid an ugly word; to anybody but his wife on this her first arrival in London, he would have flung it out.

"Have you brought no nursemaid, Winny?"

"Good gracious, no! How could I tell I might afford to bring one, Gerald? You know I had but one maid for everything, down there."

Hurrying them into a cab, Gerald went in search of the luggage, suppressing a groan, and glancing over his shoulder on all sides. Bundles done up in kitchen towels and pillow-cases! If Gerald Yorke had never before offered up a prayer, he did then: that no ill-chance might have brought any of his fashionable friends to the station that unlucky afternoon.

"Drive through the obscurest streets," he said in the cabman's ear on his return, as he mentioned Hamish Channing's address. "Never mind taking a round; I'll pay you." And the man put his whip to the bridge of his nose, and gave a confidential nod in answer: for which Gerald could have knocked him down.

"And now, Winny, tell me how you came to do this mad thing," he said sternly, when he was seated with them.

For answer, Mrs. Yorke broke into a burst of sobs. It was coming, she thought. But Gerald had no mind for a scene there; and so held his tongue to a better opportunity. But the tears continued, and Gerald angrily ordered her not to be a child.

"You've never kissed one of us," sobbed Winny. "You've not as much as kissed baby."

"Would you have had me kiss you on the platform," he angrily demanded. "Make a family embracing of it, for the benefit of the public! I'll kiss you when we get in. You are more ridiculous than ever, Winny."

The three little things, sitting opposite, were still as mice, looking shyly at him with their timid blue eyes. Gerald took one upon his knee for a moment and pressed its face to his own, fondly enough. Fortune was very unkind to him he thought, in not giving him a fine house for these children, and a thousand or two per annum to keep them on.

"Are we going to your chambers, Gerald?"

"That is another foolish question, Winny! My chambers are hardly large enough for me. I have taken lodgings for you this morning; the best I could get at a minute's notice. London is full of drawbacks and inconveniences: if you have to put up with some, you must remember that you have brought them on yourself."

"Will there be any dinner for us?" asked Winny timidly. "The poor little girls are very hungry."

"You are going to Mrs. Hamish Channing's until to-night. I dare say she'll have dinner ready for you. Afterwards you can call at the rooms, and settle with the landlady what you will want got in."

The change in Mrs. Yorke's face was like magic; a glad brightness overspread it. Once when she was ill in lodgings at Helstonleigh, before her husband removed her into Gloucestershire, her eldest child being then an infant, Hamish Channing's wife had been wonderfully kind to her. To hear that she was going to *her* seemed like a haven of refuge in this wilderness of a London, which she had never until now visited.

"Oh, thank you, Gerald. I am so glad."

"I suppose you have brought some money with you," said Gerald. "I think I have about sixteen shillings," she answered, beginning to turn out her purse.

"Where's the rest?"

"What rest?"

"The money for the furniture. You wrote me word you had sold it."

"But there were the debts, Gerald. I sold the furniture to pay them. How else could I have left?—they'd not have let me come away. It was not enough to pay all; there's six or seven pounds unpaid still."

An exceedingly blank look settled on Gerald's face. The one ray of comfort looming out of this checkmating step of his wife's, reconciling him to it in a small degree, had been the thought of the money she would receive for the furniture. But what he might have said was stopped by a shriek from Winny, who became suddenly aware that the cab, save for themselves, was empty.

"The luggage, Gerald, the luggage! O Gerald, the luggage!"

"Hold your tongue, Winny," said Gerald angrily, pulling her back as she was about either to spring out or to stop the driver. "The luggage is all right. It will be sent to the lodgings."

"But we want some of the things at once," said Winny piteously. "What shall we do without them?"

"The best you can," coolly answered Gerald. "Did you suppose you were going to fill Hamish Channing's hall with boxes and bundles?"

Mrs. Channing stood ready to receive them with her face of welcome, and the first thing Winny did was to burst into tears and sob out the grievance about the luggage in her arms. If Gerald Yorke had married a pretty wife, he had also married a silly and incapable one: and Gerald had known it for some years now. Just waiting to hand them over to Mrs. Channing's care, and to give the written address of the lodgings, Gerald left. He was engaged that afternoon to dine with a party at Richmond, and would not see his wife again before the morrow.

"Don't—you—mean—to live with us?" she ventured to ask, on hearing him say this, her face growing white with dismay.

"Of course I shall live with you," sharply answered Gerald. "But I have my chambers, and when engagements keep me out, shall sleep at them."

And Gerald, lightly vaulting into a passing hansom, was cantered off. Winny turned to her good friend Ellen Channing for consolation, who gave her the best that the circumstances admitted of.

Hamish, beyond his bright welcome, saw very little of Winny that evening; he was shut up with her husband's manuscript. He took her home at night. The lodgings engaged by Gerald consisted of a sitting-room and two bed-chambers, the people of the house to cook and give attendance. Hamish paid the cab and accompanied her indoors. The first thing Mrs. Gerald Yorke did, was to sit down on the lowest chair and begin to cry. Her little girls, worn out with the day's excitement and the happy play in Nelly Channing's nursery, were fit to drop with fatigue, and put themselves quietly on the carpet.

"Oh, Mr. Channing! do you think he is not going to forgive me!" "It is so cruel of him to send us into this strange place all alone."

"He had an engagement, you know," answered Hamish, his tone taking, perhaps unconsciously, the same kind of soothing persuasion that he would have used to a child. "London engagements are sometimes not to be put off."

"I wish I was back in Gloucestershire!" she bewailed.

"It will be all right, Mrs. Yorke," he returned gaily. "One always feels unhappy in a fresh place. The night Ellen first slept in London she cried to be back at Helstonleigh."

A servant, who looked untidy enough to have a world full of work upon her back, showed Hamish out. In answer to a question, she said that she was the only one kept, and would have to wait on the new lodgers. Hamish slipped some money into the girl's hand and bade her do all she could for the lady and the little children.

And so, leaving Gerald's wife in her new home, he went back to his work.

He, Hamish Channing, with his good looks and his courtly presence, was treading the streets gaily on the following morning. Many a man, pressing on to business, spared a moment to turn and glance at him, wondering who the fine, handsome fellow was, with the bright and good face. It was a face that would be bright always, bright in dying; but it had more than two shades of care on it to-day. For if any one living man hated, more than another, to inflict pain and disappointment, it was Hamish Channing. He was carrying back Gerald's manuscript, and had no good report to give of it.

However clever Gerald might be at dashing off slashing articles in the review line, he would never be able to succeed in fiction. This first attempt proved it indisputably to Hamish Channing. The story was unconnected, the plot scarcely distinguishable, and there were very

grave faults besides, offending against morality and good taste. Not one reader in fifty, and that must be some school-girl, inveterate after novels, could get through the first volume. Certainly, in plunging into a long work of fiction, Gerald Yorke had mistaken his vocation. How entirely different this crude and worthless book was from the high-class work Hamish was writing, his cheeks glowed to contemplate. Not in triumph over Gerald; never a tarnish of such a feeling could lie in his generous heart; but at the consciousness of his own capability, the gift given him by God, and what the work would be to the public. But that he deemed it lay in his duty, in all kindness, not to deceive Gerald, he would not have told him the truth; no, in spite of the promise exacted of him to give a just, unvarnished report.

Gerald sat at breakfast in a flowery dressing-gown, in the rooms he was pleased to call his chambers, his breakfast and its appointments perfect. Silver glittered on the table, its linen was of the fairest damask, the chocolate and cream sent its aroma aloft. Gerald's taste was luxurious: he could not have lived upon a sovereign a week as Roland was doing: perhaps Roland had never learnt to do it but for that renowned voyage of his.

" Halloa, Hamish, old fellow! What brings you here so early?"

" Oh, one or two matters," answered Hamish, keeping the manuscript out of sight at first, for he really shrank from having to tell of it. " I was not sure you would be up."

" I had to be up early this morning. Tell your news out, Hamish; I suppose the gist of it is that Winny is in a state of rebellion. Stay! I'll send the things away. One has no appetite after a Star-and-Garter dinner and pipes to wind up with till three in the morning. You have breakfasted?"

" An hour ago."

" It is an awfully provoking step for Winny to have taken," said Gerald, as his servant disappeared with the breakfast-tray. " She has no doubt been grumbling to you and Mrs. Channing about her 'wrongs'—it's what she called it yesterday—but I know mine are worse. Fancy her taking such a mad start! What on earth I am to do with them in town, I can't guess. You've not got her outside, I suppose? You know, Hamish, I couldn't help myself; I had to leave her."

" Qui s'excuse s'accuse," returned Hamish with one of his sunny smiles, chancing on the very common French proverb that Mr. Bede Greatorex had applied but recently to Gerald's brother.

" Oh bother," said Gerald. " Did Winny strike last night and refuse to go into lodgings?"

" She went all right enough; but she didn't like your leaving her to go alone. My wife seized hold of the occasion to read me a lecture, saying *she* should not like it at all; I'm not sure but she said 'not put up with it.'

"Your wife is a different woman from mine," growled Gerald; for Hamish's gay, half mocking tone, covering a kinder and deeper feeling, jarred somewhat on his perplexed mind. "You knew what Winny was before to-day. I shall go down and see her by-and-by."

"Shall you keep these chambers on?"

"Keep these chambers on!" echoed Gerald, "why, of course I must keep them on. And live at them, too, in a general way. Though how I shall afford the cost of the two places, the devil only knows."

"You have been affording it hitherto. Winny has had a separate home."

"What keeps a cottage down yonder, won't pay lodgings in London. You must know that, Hamish."

Hamish did not immediately speak: if he could not agree, he would not disagree. He did not see why Gerald should not take either a small house, or apartments sufficiently commodious, in a neighbourhood good enough for his fashionable friends not to be ashamed to resort to. Hamish and Gerald understood things in so different a light: Gerald estimated people (and fashion) by their drawl, and dress, and assumption of fast life; Hamish *knew* that all good men, no matter though they were of the very highest rank, were proud to respect worth and intellect and sincere nature in a poor little home, as in a palace perched aloft on Hyde Park gates. Ah me! I think one must be coming near to quit this world and its frivolity, ere the curtain of dazzling gauze that falls before our eyes is lifted.

"Are you getting on with my manuscript, Hamish?"

"I have brought it," said Hamish, taking it from his pocket. "I put away my own work——"

"Oh, thank you, old fellow," was the quick interruption:

"Now don't thank me for nothing, Gerald. I was about to say that one can judge so much better of a book, in reading it without breaks given to other work, that I stretched a point; for my own pleasure, you know."

Gerald drew the parcel towards him and opened it tenderly, undoing the string as if it fastened some rare treasure. Hamish saw the feeling, the glad expectation, and his fine blue eyes took a tinge of sadness. Gerald looked up.

"I think I'll tell you how it is, Hamish. Upon this manuscript——"

What was it that happened? Gerald broke off abruptly and looked at the door: his mouth slightly opened, his ear was cocked in the attitude of one, listening anxiously. Hamish, unused to the sounds of the place, heard nothing whatever.

"Say I'm out, Hamish, old fellow; say I'm out," whispered Gerald, disappearing noiselessly within an invisible closet; invisible from being papered like the walls and opening with a nob no bigger than a nut. Hamish sat in a trance of inward astonishment, easy as ever outwardly, a half smile upon his face.

He opened the door in answer to a knock. A respectable-looking man at once stepped inside, asking to see Mr. Yorke.

Hamish with a gesture of his hand pointed to the empty room, indicating that Mr. Yorke was not there to be seen. The applicant looked round it curiously ; and at that moment Gerald's servant came up with a rush, and glanced round as keenly as the applicant.

"My master's gone out for the day, Mr. Brookes."

"How many more times am I to have that answer given me ?" demanded Mr. Brookes. "It's hardly likely he'd be gone out so soon as this."

"Likely or not, he's gone," said the servant, speaking with easy indifference.

"Well, look here ; there's the account, delivered once more and for the last time," said Mr. Brookes, handing in a paper. "If it's not paid within four-and-twenty hours, I shall summons him to the county-court."

"And he means it," emphatically whispered the servant in Hamish's hearing, as Mr. Brookes's descending footsteps echoed on the stairs.

Hamish pulled back the closet-door by the knob to release Gerald. He came forth in a whirlwind—if a furious passion may be called one. Hamish had not heard so much abuse lavished on one person for many a day as Gerald gave his servant. The man had been momentarily off his usual vigilant guard, and so allowed Gerald's sanctum (and all but his person) to be invaded by an enemy.

"I owe the fellow a trifle for boots," said Gerald, when he had driven his servant from the room. "He is an awful dun, and will not be put off much longer. Seven pounds ten shillings,"—dashing open the bill. "And for that paltry sum he'll county-court me !"

"Pay him," said Hamish.

"Pay him ! I should like to pay him," returned Gerald gloomily. "I'd pay him to-day and have done with him if I could, and think it the best money ever laid out. I'm awfully hard up, Hamish, and that's a fact."

Hamish began mentally to deliberate whether he was able to help him. Gerald stood on the hearth-rug, very savage with the world in general.

"I'd move heaven and earth to avoid the county court," he said. "It would be sure to get about. Everything is contrary and cross-grained just now : Carrick's not to the fore ; Vincent Yorke says he has neither cross nor coin to bless himself with, let alone me. I never got but one loan from the fellow in my life, and be hanged to him !"

"Your expenses are so heavy, Gerald."

"Who the devil is to make them lighter?" fiercely demanded Gerald. "One can't live as a hermit. I beg your pardon, old fellow, I'm cross,

I know, but I have so much to worry me. Things come upon one all at once. Because I had not enough ways for my ready money just now, Winny must come up and want a heap."

"What is pressing you particularly?"

"That," said Gerald, flicking his hand in the direction of the boot bill. "There's nothing else very much at the present moment." But the "present moment" with Gerald meant the present actual hour that was passing.

"About my manuscript," he resumed, his tone brightening a little as he sat down to the table to face Hamish.

Still, for an instant or two, Hamish hesitated. He drew the sheets towards him and turned them over, as if in deliberation what to say.

"You charged me to tell you the truth, Gerald."

"Of course I did," loudly answered Gerald. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Well, Gerald, I should not but for your earnest wish, and that it is I suppose the more real kindness to do so, as it may prevent you from wasting time upon another. I am afraid it won't do, old friend."

"What won't do?" asked Gerald, with wide-open eyes that showed the wonder in them.

Delicately, gently, considerately, as he could have imparted ill news to the dearest friend he had on earth, Hamish Channing told him the story would not do, would not, at least, be a success, and pointed out why he thought so. The book was full of mistakes and faults; these for the most part he passed lightly over: speaking rather of the defects of the work as a whole.

"Go on; let's have it all," said Gerald, when there was a pause: and Hamish saw nothing of the suppressed passion, or of the irony that lay at the bottom of the following words. "You think I cannot succeed in fiction?"

"Not in a long work——"

"Why the work's a short one," interrupted Gerald.

"Very short indeed. Some writers of fiction (and as a rule they are the best, Gerald) put as much in a volume and a half as you have written for the three volumes. I don't think you could write a successful work of fiction in even one volume, Gerald—as I count success. It must have a plot; it must have consecutiveness in the working out; it must have——"

"It must have, in short, just the qualities that my work lacks," interposed Gerald with a laugh: and Hamish felt relieved that he was receiving things so easily.

"If I thought that any hints or help would enable you to accomplish a work likely to be successful, I would heartily put myself at your service, Gerald. But I don't. I am sure you have mistaken your vocation in attempting a work of fiction."

"Thank you," said Gerald. "Your work has not been tried yet. That's sure to prove a success, I suppose?"

The bright glow of anticipation lighted Hamish Channing's sensitive face. It would have betrayed the all-powerful hope lying within him, apart from the involuntary smile checked on his lips.

"I could hardly bring myself to make the report, Gerald. And should not, I think, but that I care for your interests as for those of my own brothers. You know I do, and therefore will not mistake me. I debated whether I should not get up some excuse for giving no opinion, except that you had better submit it to a publisher. Of course you can do that still."

"Let me understand you," said Gerald. "You wish to inform me that no publisher would be likely to take it?"

Hamish paused slightly. "I do not say that. Publishers take all kinds of works. The chief embarrassment on my mind is this, Gerald: that, if published, it could not bring you much honour or credit; or—I think—returns."

They shook hands; and Hamish, who would be late at his office, departed, leaving Gerald alone. He went along with a light, glad step, wondering whether he could afford to help Gerald out of the money difficulty of the day. Sixteen guineas were due to him for literary work; if he got it paid, he would enclose the receipt for the boot-bill to Gerald, saying nothing.

Leaving Gerald alone. Alone with his bitter anger; with an evil look on his face, and revenge at his heart.

There was only one thing could have exceeded Gerald Yorke's astonishment at the veto pronounced, and that was the utter incredulity with which he received it. He had looked upon his book as a *rara avis*, a black swan: just as we all look on our productions, whether they may be bad or good. The bad ones perhaps are thought most of: they are more trusted to bring back substantial reward. Of course, therefore, Gerald Yorke could but regard the judgment as a deliberately false one, spoken in jealous envy; tendered to keep him back from fame. He made the great mistake that many another has made before him, when receiving honest advice in a similar case, and many will make again. And the book gained in his opinion, rather than lost.

"Curse him for his insolence! curse him for a false, self-sufficient puppy!" foamed Gerald, rapping out unorthodox words in his passion. "'Ware to yourself, Mr. Hamish Channing! you shall find, sooner or later, what it is to make an enemy of me."

But Gerald received some balm ere the day was over, for Mr. Brookes's receipted bill came to him by post in a blank envelope. And he wondered who on earth had been civil enough to pay the money.

advantages which another family has over itself in proportion to its own failing. The knowledge of the world and its need to make life easy will tell education how wide duties and functions are, and how great a necessity it is, also, to make knowledge and industry the basis of every school. I leave the rest to W. C. so as to let him do as well as he can.

VIRGINIA COTTAGE.

"WILL you go to see our effort at Virginia Cottage?" said Mrs. Chambers to me. And I went accordingly.

Education is good or bad in proportion to its suitability to the individual receiving it, and the use the recipient can put it to. So much has been said and written during later years upon the necessity of educating the poor, and the best and worst manner of doing it, that the subject has grown just a little wearisome. The very few men or women who take unusual interest in the cause, making it into a sort of hobby, will catch up an article on the question, and read it with more or less eagerness; but that the generality of the world are glad quietly to pass over the pages for something more attractive and novel, is indisputable. The continuous movement on the question has done some good and some harm. That it has not settled the point satisfactorily to all minds, as to the kind of education the industrial classes ought to receive, is proved by the controversy of opinions existing still.

Englishmen, aroused to action on any heretofore neglected duty, are apt to run into extremes the other way. And when the necessity of doing something to remedy the general ignorance took full possession of the public, many well-meaning individuals appeared to think that the son or daughter of a labouring man ought to begin with geology, and go on to "pictures, taste, Shakespear, and the musical glasses." Girls were put to learn music and fancy work, lads to French and natural sciences. This is no exaggeration. But the question naturally arises—If all are to be made into ladies and gentlemen, who will do the work? The next generation will require labourers; working men, tillers of the ground, domestic servants. To give to this class generally an education out of their sphere will do them far more harm than to give them none at all. Whether boys and girls may be born in a high or a low station, they should receive the preparatory training that will fit them for their future walk in life. The "march of intellect," that we hear so much about, in taking its stride, has taken rather too long a one. If the children of the national, and ragged, and other schools are to get what may be called a comprehensive and refined education, they will jostle against the classes really born to it, and the world may find itself turned upside down.

The kind of knowledge—let us say also, ability—derived from books, is not the best for those who have to earn their bread by manual labour. Reading without trouble, writing a legible hand, and some simple

arithmetic, with information on general subjects, social, and instructive, are all that is needful : but this must be combined with special instruction in some trade or craft by which they will hereafter live. How excessively deficient the lower classes are, as a rule, of common everyday duties, nobody needs to be told. Want of natural intelligence prevails, chiefly from lack of proper directing cultivation, and the ignorance and idleness are lamentable. Numbers upon numbers of women, wives of working men, know nothing whatever of some kinds of household duties. Cooking is one. Frequently—in, perhaps, by far the largest proportion of the whole—a woman goes to her grave, never having learnt them. They are scrambled through in some way ; have just kept the family together (or not kept it), and there it ends.

What has been long required is a different kind of training—a medium between subjects too high, and neglect and intense ignorance. With the plain instruction mentioned above, industry should be practically inculcated : the boys trained to the labour fitted for their sphere, the girls to theirs—to wash and iron, to clean, to sew, to cook ; a girl ought to be brought up to do them all. She cannot be in her own home ; there's nobody there to teach her, for her mother is as ignorant as she is. Girls are turned out of the national and other schools with a smattering of learning that will never be of use to one in fifty of them, and entirely unversed in the things that will. Use ! Instead of that, this learning may prove a snare and a delusion. For, if you give girls a taste for higher things, how many of them will be content to take up afterwards with the hard, prosy work which is their association by right.

Man is born to labour, as the sparks fly upwards. And this labour, by Heaven's decree, shall never cease from the earth. There has been a tendency latterly to ignore this,—to say to the people that the labour is beneath them, or they above it : but it will have to be done. Bring up the boys and girls to be useful in the state of life to which it has pleased God to call them. Train them to habits of industry—they will find their pleasure in it, we capable help-mates in our homes ; the working-man, a good wife ; the wives, steady husbands ; the future children, efficient mothers. But how is this to be accomplished ?

The question, How, has been the subject of anxious care and thought. Some earnest-minded people have already set to work to endeavour to carry out a beginning. And that is what I want to tell of.

Virginia Cottage, Moscow Road, Bayswater. In this little house, whose rooms are very small, an effort is being made to train and help a few of these poor boys and girls. It is not the first attempt. The same lady who has organized this industrial school in London, Mrs. Chambers, had already established others of the same kind both in England and Italy, of which great good has come. In conjunction with her husband, Lieutenant-Colonel Chambers, she has devoted time, and money, and energy to them without stint.

The afternoon was cold and dull ; and in turning out of the Queen's Road Station of the Metropolitan Railway, some spots of rain fell : but Moscow Road was but a step or two off, and Virginia Cottage a little way down it. "I come here on the part of Mrs. Chambers," I said, when the Matron came forward : and her face and voice alike expressed a welcome.

Sixty children have been admitted. They appear to be of the very poor ; and, but for this school, would probably be in the street gutters. In the first room we entered the Matron was holding her girl's sewing-class ; in the next, the master-shoemaker sat, teaching his craft to a number of boys ; in a third, the following afternoon, the master-tailor would be there.

When the children go in the morning they get a cup of coffee and a good thick slice of bread. Three hours are devoted to mental learning : reading, writing, &c. Each child then has a can of soup, or sometimes a large plate of good rice-pudding, and in the afternoon the *working* instruction begins. Some of the boys learn tailoring, some shoemaking ; girls learn sewing, cleaning, washing, and ironing. The girls will also be taught to prepare the food—whose quality may be varied and raised when circumstances admit of it. Several of the children are very young, almost infants, and for them there is a separate room. An efficient laundress is below ; we went to see her : the clothes lying on the board were so neatly and smoothly folded, that ironing (one of the girls at that moment engaged in it) seemed superfluous. The great aim is to instruct these future men and women patiently and effectually,—to render them fit to play their useful part in this working world. Surely this is a step in the right direction, and must lead on to it !

At first—now—funds are wanted. But it is proposed and intended to make the school self-supporting. Laundry-work, supplied by families interested in the success of the effort, plain sewing, and other kinds of work done in the schools, will be paid for. In fact, this is truly what it has been called, an effort at a beginning. We all remember what great results have come of very small beginnings ; and it is impossible to foretell how wide an extent this may grow into. One thing is quite certain—that the pupils will by this course of tuition be better prepared for the battle of life than other children of their class have hitherto been. Help is wanted for it ; donations would be welcome ; a visit to the Cottage is open to all. May it go on, and prosper !

E. W.

April, 1869.

CRABB RAVINE.

"YES! Halloa! What is it?"

To be woke up short by a knocking, or else, in the night, is enough to make you start in bed, and stare round in confusion. The room was dark, save for the light that always glimmers in on a summer's night, and I listened and waited for more. Nothing came: it was all as silent as the grave.

I had gone to bed at half-past nine, dead tired. The Squire and Tod were away; Mrs. Todhetley went over to the Coneys' after tea, and did not seem in a hurry to come back. They fried one of the fish I had caught for my supper; and after that, there being nobody to speak to, I went to bed.

It was a knocking that had woke me out of my sleep: I was sure of that. And it sounded exactly as though it were at the window—which was very improbable. Calling out again to know who was there, and what was wanted—but not very loudly, because the children slept within earshot—and getting no answer, I lay down again, and was all but asleep when the noise came a second time.

It was at the dining-room window, right underneath mine. There could be no mistake. The ceilings of the old-fashioned house were low; the windows were very near each other, and mine was down at the top. I thought it time to jump from the bed, and take a look out.

Well, I was surprised! Instead of its being the middle of the night, it must be quite early still; for the lamp was yet in the dining-room. It was a cosy kind of room, with a bow window abutting on the garden, whose middle compartment opened to the ground lengthways, as French windows do. My window was a bow also, and close above the other. Throwing it up, I looked round.

There was not a soul to be seen. And the knocking could not have been from within, because the inside shutters were shut: they did not cover the top panes, and the light of the lamp gleamed through them on the mulberry tree. As I leaned out, wondering, the tinkling old clock at North Crabb Church began to tell the hour. I counted the strokes one by one,—ten. Only ten o'clock! And I thought I had been asleep half the night.

All in a moment I caught sight of somebody moving slowly away. He was keeping in the shade; close to the shrubs that encircled the lawn, as if not caring to be seen. A short, thin man, in dark clothes, and round black felt hat. Who he was, and what he wanted, was more

than I could imagine. It could not be a robber. Robbers don't come to houses with a knock before their people have gone to bed.

The small side-gate gave a bang, and Mrs. Todhetley came in. Old Coney's farm was but a stone's-throw off, and she had run home by herself. We people in the country think nothing of being abroad alone at night. The man emerged from the shade, and put himself right into her path, on the gravel walk. They stood there together. I could see him better now: there was no moon, but the night was light; and it flashed into my mind that he was the same man I had seen Mrs. Todhetley with in the morning, as I went across the fields, with my rod and line. She was at the stile, about to descend into the Ravine, when he came up from it, and accosted her. He was a stranger; wearing a seedy, shabby, black coat; and I had wondered what he wanted. They were still talking together when I got out of sight, for I turned to look.

Not for long did they stand now. The gentleman went away; she came scuttering on with her head down, a soft 'kerchief of wool tied over her cap. In all North Crabb, nobody was so fearful of catching cold in the face as Mrs. Todhetley.

"Who was it?" I called out, when she was underneath the window: which seemed to startle her considerably, for she gave a spring back, right on to the grass.

"Johnny! how you frightened me! What are you looking out at?"

"At that fellow who has just taken himself off. Who is he?"

"I do believe you have got on nothing but your nightshirt! You'll be sure to take cold. Shut the window down, and get into bed."

Four times over, in all, had I to ask about the man before I got an answer. Now it was the nightshirt, now the catching cold, now the open window and the damp air. She always wanted to be as tender over us as though we were chickens.

"The man that met me in the path?" she got to, at length. "He made some excuse for being here: was not sure whose house it was, I think he said: had turned in by mistake to the wrong one."

"That's all very fine; but, not being sure, he ought to mind his manners. He came rapping at the dining-room window like anything, and it woke me up. Had you been at home, sitting there, good mother, you might have been startled out of your seven senses."

"So I should, Johnny. The Coneys would not let me come away: they had friends with them. Good-night, dear. Shut down that window."

She went on to the side-door. I shut the window down, opened it at the top, and let the white curtain drop before it. It was an hour or two before I got to sleep, and had the man and the knocking in my thoughts all the while.

"Don't say anything about it in the house, Johnny," Mrs. Todhetley said to me, in the morning. "It might alarm the children." So I promised her I would not.

Tod came home at midday, not the Squire; and the first thing I did was to tell. I'd not have broken faith with the mother for the world; not even for Tod; but it never entered my mind that she wished me to keep it an entire secret, except from those, servants or others, who might be likely to repeat it before Hugh and Lena. I cautioned Tod. "Confound his impudence!" cried Tod. "Could he not be satisfied with disturbing the house by the door at night, but he must make it the window? I wish I had been at home."

Crabb Ravine lay to the side of our house, beyond the fields. It was a regular wilderness. The sharp descent began in that three-cornered grove, of which you've heard before, for it was where Daniel Ferrar hung himself; and the wild, deep, mossy dell, about as wide as an ordinary road, went running along below, soft, and green, and damp. Towering banks, sloping backwards, rose on either side; a mass of verdure in summer; of briars, brown and tangled, in winter. Dwarf shrubs, tall trees, blackberry and nut bushes, sweet-briar, and broom clustered there in wild profusion. Primroses and violets peeped up when spring came in; blue-bells and cowslips, dog-roses, woodbine, and lots more sweet flowers, came later. Few people would descend except by the proper zigzag path leading down the side bank, for a fall might have snapped limbs, besides bringing one's pantaloons to grief. No houses stood near it, unless it could be said that ours and old Coney's did; and the fields bordering it on this side belonged to Squire Todhetley. If you went down the zigzag path, walked along the Ravine some way, and then up another zigzag on the opposite side, you came soon to Timberdale, a small place in itself, but our nearest post-town. The high-road to Timberdale, winding past our house from South Crabb, was double the distance; so that people might sometimes be seen in the Ravine by day: but nobody cared to go near it at evening as it had the reputation of being haunted. A mysterious light might sometimes be observed there at night, dodging itself about the banks, where it would be rather difficult for human legs to walk: some said it was a will-o'-the-wisp, and some said a ghost. It was a regular difficulty to get even a farm-servant to go the near way to Timberdale after dark.

One morning, when Tod and I were running through the Ravine in search of Tom Coney, we came slap against a man, who seemed to be sneaking there, for he turned short off, amidst the underwood, to hide himself. I knew him by his hat.

"Tod, that's the man," I whispered.

"What man? He from the moon, Johnny?"

"The one that came knocking at the window three nights ago."

"Oh!" said Tod, carelessly. "He looks like a fellow who comes out with begging petitions."

It might have been an hour after that. We had come up from the

Ravine, on our side of it, not having seen or spoken to a soul, except Luke Mackintosh. Tod told me to stay and waylay Coney if he made his appearance, while he went again to the Farm in search of him. Accordingly, I was sitting on the fence (put there to hinder the cattle and sheep from getting over the brink of the Ravine), throwing stones and whistling, when I saw Mrs. Todhetley go down the zigzag. She did not see me : the fence could hardly be got to for trees, and I was hidden.

Just because I had nothing to do, I watched her as she went: tall, thin, and light in figure, she could spin along nearly as quick as we. The zigzag path went in and out, sloping along sideways on the bank until it brought itself to the dell at a spot a good bit beyond me as I looked down, finishing there with a high, rough step. Mrs. Todhetley took it with a spring.

What next ! In one moment the man with the black coat and hat had appeared from somewhere, and put himself in front of her parasol. Before I could quit the place, and leap down after her, a conviction took me that the meeting was not accidental : and I rubbed my eyes in wonder, and thought I must be dreaming.

The summer air was clear as crystal ; not a bee's hum just then disturbed its stillness. Detached words ascended from where they stood ; and now and again a whole sentence. She kept looking each way as if afraid to be seen ; and so did he, for that matter. The colloquy seemed to be about money. I caught the word no end of times ; and Mrs. Todhetley said it was "impossible." "I must, and I will have it," came up distinctly from him in answer.

"What's that, Johnny?"

The interruption came from Tod. All my attention absorbed in them, he stood at my elbow before I knew he was near. When I would have answered, he suddenly put his hand upon my mouth for silence. His face had a proud anger on it as he looked down.

Mrs. Todhetley seemed to be using entreaty to the man, for she clasped her hands in a piteous manner, and then turned to ascend the zigzag. He followed her, talking very fast. As to me, I was in a regular sea of marvel, understanding nothing. Our heads were amidst the bushes, hardly to be distinguished from them, even if she had looked up.

"No," she said, turning round upon him ; and they were near us then, half way up the path, so that every word was audible. "You must not venture to come to the house, or near the house. I would not have Mr. Todhetley know of this for the world : for your sake as well as his.

"Todhetley's not at home," was the man's answer : and Tod gave a growl as he heard it.

"If he is not, his son is. It would be all the same ; or worse."

"His son's here," roared out passionate Tod. "What the deuce is the meaning of this, sir ?"

The man shot down the path like an arrow. Mrs. Todhetley—who had been walking on, seemed not to have caught the words, or to know whose the voice was, or where it came from—gazed round in all directions, her countenance curiously helpless. She ran up the rest of the zigzag, and went swiftly home across the fields. Tod disentangled himself from the brambles, and drew a long breath.

"I think it's time that we went now, Johnny."

It was not often he spoke in that tone. He had always been at war with Mrs. Todhetley, and was not likely to favour her now. Generous though he was by nature, there could be no denying that he took up awful prejudices.

"It is something about money, Tod."

"I don't care what it is about—the fellow has no business to be prowling here, on my father's grounds ; and he *shan't* be, without my knowing what it's for. I'll watch Madam's movements."

"What do you think it can mean ?"

"Mean ! Why, that the individual is one of her poor relations, come to drain as much of my father's money out of her as he can. *She* is the one to blame. I wonder how she dare encourage him ! "

"Perhaps she can't help herself."

"Not help herself? Don't show yourself a fool, Johnny. An honest-minded, straightforward woman would appeal to my father in any annoyance of this sort, or to me, in his absence, and say 'Here's So-and-so come down upon us, asking for help, can we give it him ?'—and there's no doubt the Squire *would* give it him ; he's soft enough for anything."

It was of no use contending. I did not see it quite in that light, but Tod liked his own opinion. He flung up his head with a haughty jerk.

"You have tried to defend Mrs. Todhetley before, in trifling matters, Johnny : don't attempt it now. Would any good woman, any *lady*, say if you will, subject herself to this kind of thing?—hold private meetings with a man—allow him to come tapping at her sitting-room window at night? No ; not though he were her own brother."

"Tod, it may be her brother. She'd not do anything wrong willingly."

"Shut up, Johnny. She never had a brother."

Of course I shut up forthwith, and went across the fields by Tod's side in silence, his strides wide enough for ten indignant men, his head aloft in the air. Mrs. Todhetley was hearing Lena read when we got in, and looked as if she had never been abroad that morning.

Some days went on. The man remained near, for he was seen occasionally, and the servants began to talk. One remarked upon him, wondering who he was ; another remarked upon him, speculating on what he did there. In a quiet country place, a dodging stranger excites

curiosity, and this one dodged about as much as ever the ghost's light did. If you caught sight of him in the three-cornered plantation, he'd vanish forthwith, and appear next in the Ravine; if he stood peering out from the trees on the bank, and found himself observed, the next minute he'd be stooping amidst the thick broom on the other side.

This came to be observed, and was thought strange, naturally; Hannah, who was often out with Hugh and Lena, saw him mostly, and she talked to the other servants. One evening, when we were finishing dinner, the glass doors of the bow-window open, Hannah came back with the children. They ran across the grass-plat after the fawn—one we had, just then—and Hannah sat down in the porch of the side-door to wait. Old Thomas had just drawn the slips from the table, and went through the passage to the side-door, to shake them.

"I say," cried Hannah's voice, "I saw that man again."

"Where?" asked Thomas, between his shakes of the linen, which we could hear distinctly.

"In the old place—the Ravine. He was sitting on the stile at the zigzag, as cool as might be."

"Did you speak to him? I should, if I came across the man; and ask what his business might be in these parts."

"I didn't speak to him," returned Hannah. "I'd rather not. There's no knowing the answer one might get, or what it is he's looking after. He spoke to the children."

"What did he say to them?"

"Asked if they'd go away with him to some beautiful coral islands over the sea, and catch pretty birds, and parrots, and monkeys. He called them by their names, too,—'Hugh' and 'Lena.' I should like to know how he got hold of them."

"I can't help thinking but he belongs to them engineering folks that come spying for no good on people's land: the Squire won't like it if they cut a railroad right through here," said Thomas. And the supposition did not appear to please Hannah.

"Well, you must be a fool, old Thomas! Engineers have no need to hide themselves as if they were afraid of being took up for murder. He has got about as much the cut of a engineer as you have, and no more: they don't go about looking like Methodist parsons run to seed. *My* opinion is that he's something of that sort."

"A Methodist parson!"

"No; not anything half so respectable. If I spoke out my thoughts, though, I dare say you'd laugh at me."

"Not I," said Thomas. "Make haste. I forgot to put the claret-jug on the table."

"Then I've got it in my head that he is one of them insidious Mormons. They appear in neighbourhoods without the smallest warning,

lie there partly concealed by day, and go abroad at night persuading all the likely women and girls to join their sect. My sister told me about it in a letter she wrote me only three days ago. There has been a Mormon down there ; he called himself a saint, she says : and when he went finally away, he took fifteen young women with him. Fifteen, Thomas ! and after only three weeks' persuasion ! It's as true as that you've got that damask cloth in your hand."

Nothing further was heard for a minute. Then Thomas spoke. "Has the man here been seen talking with young women ?"

"Who is to know? They take care *not* to be seen ; that's their craft. And so you see, Thomas, I'd rather steer clear of the man, and not give him the opportunity of trying his arts on me. I can tell him it's not Hannah Wall that would be cajoled off to a barbarous desert at the tail of a man who had got fifteen other wives beside!—Lord help the women for geese!—Miss Lena (raising her voice to a scream), don't you tear about after the fawn like that ; you'll put yourself into a pretty heat."

"I'd look him up when I came home, if I were the Squire," said Thomas, who evidently took it all gravely in. "We don't want a Mormon on the place."

"If he were not a Mormon, which I'm pretty sure he is, I should say he was a kidnapper of children," went on Hannah. "After we had got past him ever so far, he managed to 'tice Hugh back to him at the stile, gave him a sugar-stick, and said he'd take him away if he'd go. It struck me he'd like to kidnap him.—Miss Lena, then, I won't have it ! look at your hat on the grass. You'll get a face like the full moon."

Tod, sitting at the foot of the table in the Squire's place, had listened to all this deliberately, showing that he listened. Mrs. Todhetley, opposite to him, her back to the light, had tried, in a feeble manner, once or twice to drown the sounds by saying something. But when urgently wanting to speak, we often can't ; and her efforts died away helplessly. She looked miserably uncomfortable ; she seemed conscious of Tod's feeling in the matter ; and when Hannah wound up with the bold assertion touching the kidnapping of Hugh, she gave a start of alarm, which left her face white.

"Who is this man that shows himself in the neighbourhood?" asked Tod, putting the question to her in a slow, marked manner, his dark eyes, stern then, fixed on hers.

"Johnny, those cherries don't look ripe. Try the summer apples."

It was of no use at any time trying to put aside Tod. Before I had answered that the cherries were ripe enough for me, Tod began at her again.

"Can you tell me who he is?"

"Dear me, no," she faintly said. "I can't tell you anything about it."

"Nor what he wants?"

"No. Won't you take some wine, Joseph?"

"I shall make it my business to inquire, then," said Tod, disregarding the wine and everything else. The first time I can come across the man, unless he gives me a perfectly satisfactory answer as to what he may be doing here on our land, I'll horse-whip him."

Mrs. Todhetley put the trembling fingers of her left hand into the finger-glass, and dried them. I don't believe she knew what she was about more than a baby.

"The man is nothing to you, Joseph. Why should you interfere with him?"

"I shall interfere because my father is not here to do it," he answered, in his least compromising tones. "An ill-looking stranger has no right to be prowling mysteriously amidst us at all. But when it comes to knocking at windows at night, to waylaying—people—in solitary places, and to exciting comments from the servants, it is time somebody interfered to know the reason of it."

I am sure he had been going to say *you*; but with all his prejudice he never was insolent to Mrs. Todhetley, when face to face; and he substituted "people." Her pale blue eyes had the saddest light in them you can well conceive, and yet she tried to look as though the matter did not concern her. Old Thomas came in with the folded damask slips, little thinking he and Hannah had been overheard, put them in the drawer, and set things straight on the sideboard.

"What time tea, ma'am?" he asked.

"Any time," answered Mrs. Todhetley. "I am going over to Mr. Coney's, but not to stay. Or perhaps you'll go for me presently, Johnny, and ask whether Mrs. Coney has come home," she added, as Thomas left the room.

I said I'd go. And it struck me that she must want Mrs. Coney very particularly, for this would make the fifth time I had gone on the same errand within a week. On the morning following that rapping at the window, Mrs. Coney got news that her married daughter was ill, and started at once by the rail to visit her.

"I think I'll go and look for the fellow now," exclaimed Tod, rising from his seat, and making for the window. But Mrs. Todhetley rose too, like one in mortal fright, and put herself in his way.

"Joseph," she said, "I have no authority over you; you know that I have never attempted to exercise any since I came home to your father's house; but I must ask you to respect my wishes now."

"What wishes?"

"That you will refrain from seeking this stranger: that you will not speak or accost him in any way, should you and he by chance meet. I have good reasons for asking it."

He stood stock-still, neither saying Yes nor No; only biting his lips in the anger he had to keep down.

"Oh, very well," said he, going back to his seat. "Of course, as you put it in this light, I have no alternative. A night's delay cannot make much difference, and my father will be home to-morrow to act for himself."

"You must not mention it to your father, Joseph. You must keep it from him."

"I shall tell him as soon as he comes home."

"Tell him what? What is it that you suspect? What would you tell him?"

Tod hesitated. He had spoken in random heat; and found, on consideration, he was without a case. He could not complain to his father of *her*: in spite of his hasty temper, he was honourable as the day. Her apparent intimacy with the man would also tie his tongue as to *him*, whoever he might be.

"You must be quite aware that it is not a pleasant thing, or a proper thing, to have this mysterious individual encouraged here," he said, looking at her.

"And you think I encourage him, Joseph?"

"Well, it seems that you—that you must know who he is. I saw you talking with him one day in the Ravine," continued Tod, disdaining not to be perfectly open, now it had come to an explanation. "Johnny was with me. If he is a relative of yours, why, of course——."

"He is no relative of mine, Joseph." And Tod opened his eyes wide to hear the denial. It was the view he had taken all along.

"Then why do you suffer him to annoy you?—and I am sure he does do it. Let me deal with him. I'll soon ascertain what his business may be."

"But that is just what you must not do," she said, seeming to speak out the truth in very helplessness, like a frightened child. "You must please leave him in my hands, Joseph: I shall be able, I dare say, to—to—get rid of him shortly."

"You know what he wants?"

"Yes, I am afraid I do. It is quite my affair; and you must take no more notice of it; above all, you must not say anything to your father."

How much Tod was condemning her in his heart perhaps he'd not have cared to tell; but he could but be generous, even to his step-mother.

"I suppose I must understand that you are in some kind of trouble?"

"Indeed I am."

"If it is anything in which I can help you, you have but to ask me to do it," he said. But his manner was lofty as he spoke, his voice had a hard ring in it.

"Thank you very much, Joseph," was the meek, grateful answer. "If you will only take no further notice, and say nothing to your father when he comes home, it will be sufficiently helping me."

Tod strolled out; just as angry as he could be; and I ran over to the Farm. Jane Coney had got a letter from her mother by the afternoon post, saying she might not be home for some days to come.

"Tell Mrs. Todhetley that I'm sorry to have to send her bad news over and over again," said Jane Coney, who was sitting in the best kitchen, with her muslin sleeves turned up, and a big apron on, stripping fruit for jam. The Coneys had brought up their girls sensibly, not ashamed to be thoroughly useful, in spite of their good education, and the fair fortune they'd have. Mary was married; Jane engaged to be. I sat on the table by her, eating away at the fruit.

"What is it that Mrs. Todhetley wants with my mother, Johnny?"

"As if I knew!"

"I think it must be something urgent. When she came in, that morning, only five minutes after mamma had driven off, she was so terribly disappointed, saying she would have given a great deal to have spoken to her first. My sister is not quite so well again: that's why mamma is staying longer."

"I'll tell her."

"By the way, Johnny, what's this they are saying—about some man being seen here? A special constable, peeping after bad characters?"

"A special constable!"

Jane Coney laughed. "Or a police officer in disguise. It is what one of our maids told me."

"Oh," I answered, carelessly, for somehow I did not like the words; "you must mean a man that is looking at the land; an engineer."

"Is that all?" cried Jane Coney. "How foolish people are!"

It was a kind of untruth no doubt; but I should have told a worse in the necessity. I did not like the aspect of things; and they puzzled my brain unpleasantly all the way home.

Mrs. Todhetley was at work by the window when I got there. Tod had not made his appearance; Hugh and Lena were in bed. She dropped her work when I gave the message.

"Not for some days to come yet! Oh, Johnny!"

"But what do you want with her?"

"Well, I do want her. I want a friend just now, Johnny, that's the truth; and I think Mrs. Coney would be one."

"Joe asked if he could help you; and you said 'No.' Can I?"

"Johnny, if you could, there's no one in the world I'd rather ask. But you cannot."

"Why?"

"Because"—she smiled for a moment—"you are not old enough. If you were—of age, say—why then I would."

I had hold of the window-post, looking at her, and an idea struck me. "Do you mean that I should be able then to command money?"

"Yes, that's it, Johnny."

"But, perhaps—if I were to write to Mr. Brandon——."

"Hush!" she exclaimed in a kind of fright. "You must not talk of this, Johnny; you don't know the sad mischief you might do. Oh, if I can but keep it from you all! Here comes Joseph," she added in a whisper; and, gathering up her work, went out of the room.

"Did I not make a sign to you to come after me?" began Tod in one of his tempers.

"But I had to go over to the Coneys. I've only just got back."

He looked into the room and saw that it was empty. "Where's Madam gone? To the Ravine after her friend?"

"She was here sewing not a minute ago."

"Johnny, she told a lie. Did you notice the sound of her voice when she said the fellow was no relative of hers?"

"Not particularly."

"I did, then. At the moment, the denial took me by surprise; but I remembered the tone later. It had an untrue ring [in it]. Madam told a lie, Johnny, as sure as that we are here: I'd lay my life he *is* a relative of hers, or a connection in some way. I don't think now it is money he wants; if it were only that, she'd get it, and send him packing. It's worse than that: disgrace perhaps."

"What sort of disgrace can it be?"

"I don't know. But if something of the sort is not looming, never trust me again. And here am I, with my hands tied, forbidden to unravel it. Johnny, I feel just like a wild beast barred up in a cage."

Had he been a real wild beast he could not have given the window-frame a much worse shake, as he passed through in his anger to the bench under the mulberry-tree.

When you have to look far back to things, the recollection gets puzzled as to the order in which they happened. How it came about I am by no means clear, but an uncomfortable feeling grew up in my mind about Hugh. About both the children in fact, but Hugh more than Lena. Mrs. Todhetley seemed to dread Hugh's being abroad—and I'm sure I was not mistaken in thinking it. I heard her order Hannah to keep the children within view of the house, and not to allow Hugh to stray away from her. Had it been winter weather I suppose she'd have kept them indoors entirely: there could be no plea for it under the blue sky and the hot summer sun.

The Squire came home, but Mrs. Coney did not—although Mrs. Todhetley kept sending me for news. Twice I saw her talking to the man; who I believed made his abode in the Ravine. Tod watched, as he had threatened to do; and would often appear with drawn-in lips. There was active warfare between him and his step-mother: at least if you can say that when both kept silence. As to the Squire, he observed nothing, and knew nothing: and nobody told him. It seems a long while to relate all this, I dare say, as if it had extended over a month

of Sundays ; but I don't think it lasted much more than a fortnight in all.

One evening quite late, when the sun was setting, and the Squire was smoking his pipe on the lawn, talking to me and Tod, Lena and her mother came in at the gate. In spite of the red rays lighting up Mrs. Todhetley's face, it struck me that I had never seen it look more care-worn. Lena put her arms on Tod's knee, and began telling about a fright she had had : of a big toad that leaped out of the grass, and made her scream and cry. She cried "because nobody was with her."

"Where was mamma ?" asked Tod : but I am sure he spoke without any ulterior thought.

"Mamma had gone to the zigzag stile, to talk to the man. She told me to wait for her."

"What man ?" cried the Squire.

"Why the man," said Lena, logically. "He asks Hugh to go with him over the sea to see the birds and the red coral."

If any one face ever turned whiter than another, Mrs. Todhetley's did then. Tod looked at her, sternly, ungenerously ; and her eyes fell. She laid hold of Lena's hand, saying it was bed-time.

"What man is the child talking about?" the Squire asked her.

"She talks about so many," rather faintly answered Mrs. Todhetley. "Come, Lena dear ; Hannah's waiting for you. Say good-night."

The Squire, quite unsuspicious, thought no more. He got up and walked over to the beds to look at the flowers, holding his long churchwarden's pipe in his mouth. Tod put his back against the tree.

"It is getting complicated, Johnny."

"What is ?"

"What is ! Why Madam's drama. She is afraid of that hinted-at scheme of her friend's—the carrying-off Master Hugh beyond the sea."

He spoke in satire. "Do you think so ?" I returned.

"Upon my word and honour I do. She must be an idiot ! I should like to give her a good fright."

"Tod, I think she is frightened enough, without our giving her one."

"I think she is. She must have caught up the idea from overhearing Hannah's gossip with old Thomas. This afternoon Hugh was running through the little gate with me ; Madam came flying over the lawn and begged me not let him out of my hand, or else leave him indoors. But for being my father's wife, I should have asked her if her common-sense had gone wool-gathering."

"I suppose it has, Tod. Fancy a kidnapper in these days ! The curious thing is, that she should fear anything of the sort."

"If she really does fear it. I tell you, Johnny, the performance is growing complicated ; somewhat puzzling. But I'll see it played out if I live."

The week went on to Friday. But the afternoon was over, and evening set in, before the shock came out. Hugh was missing. The Squire had been out in the gig, taking me; and it seems they had thought Hugh was with us. I wish I had time to relate the particulars of Hugh's disappearance, and what had happened in the day: but I've not. The thing now was to find him.

The Squire thought nothing: he said Hugh must have got into the Coney's, or some other neighbour's further off: and sat down to dinner, wondering why so much to-do was made. Mrs. Todhetley looked scared to death; and Tod tore about as if he were wild. The servants were sent here, the out-door men yonder: it was like a second edition of that day in Warwickshire when we lost Lena: like it, only worse. Hannah boldly said to her mistress that the strange man must have carried off the boy.

Hour after hour the search continued. With no result. Night came on, and a bright moon to light it up. But it did not light up Hugh.

Mrs. Todhetley, a dark shawl over her head, and I dare say a darker fear over her heart, went out for the second or third time towards the Ravine. I ran after her. We had nearly reached the stile at the zigzag, when Tod came bounding over it.

"Has not the time for shielding this man gone by, think you?" he asked, placing himself in Mrs. Todhetley's path and speaking as coolly as he was able for the agitation that shook him. And why Tod, with his known carelessness, should be so moved at all, I could not fathom.

"Joseph, I do not suppose or think the man knows anything of Hugh; I have my reasons for it," she answered, bearing on for the stile, and leaning over it to look down into the Ravine's darkness.

"Will you give me permission to inquire of him?"

"You will not find the man. He is gone."

"Leave the finding him to me," persisted Tod. "Will you withdraw the embargo you laid upon me?"

"No, no," she whispered, "I cannot do it."

The trees had an uncommonly damp feel in the night, and the place altogether looked as weird as could be. I was away in the underwood; she looked down always into the Ravine and called Hugh's name aloud. Nothing but echo answered.

"It has appeared to me for several days that you have feared something of this," Tod said, trying to get a full view of her face. "It might have been better for—for all of us—if you had allowed me at first to take the affair in hand."

"Perhaps I ought; perhaps I ought," she said, bursting into tears. "Heaven knows, though, that I acted from a good motive. It was not to screen myself that I've tried to keep the matter secret."

"Oh!"

The mocking sarcasm of Tod's short comment was like nothing I ever heard.

"To screen me, perhaps?"

"Well, yes—in a measure, Joseph," she patiently said. "I only wished to spare you vexation. Oh, Joseph! if—if Hugh cannot be found, and—and all has to come out—who he is and what he wants here—remember that I wished nothing but to spare others pain."

Tod's eyes were ablaze with angry, haughty light. Spare *him!* He thought she was miserably equivocating; he had some such idea as that she sought (in words) to make him a scape-goat for her relative's sins. What he answered, I hardly know; except that he civilly dared her to speak.

"Do not spare *me*; I particularly request you will not. Yourself as much as you will, but not me."

"I have done it for the best," she pleaded. "I have done it all for the best."

"Where is this man to be found? *I* have been looking for him these several hours past, as I should think no man was ever looked for yet."

"I have said I think he is not to be found. I think he is gone."

"Gone!" shrieked Tod. "Gone!"

"I think he must be. I—I saw him just before dinner-time, here at this very stile; I gave him something that I had to give, and I think he left at once, to make the best of his way from the place."

"And Hugh?" asked Tod, savagely.

"I did not know then Hugh was missing. Oh Joseph! I can't tell what to think. When I said to him one day that he ought not to talk nonsense to the children about corals and animals, in fact, should not speak to them at all, he answered that if I did not get him the money he wanted he'd take the boy off with him. I knew it was a jest: but I could not help thinking of it when the days went on and on, and I had no money to give him.

"*Of course* he has taken the boy," said Tod, stamping his foot. And the words sent Mrs. Todhetley into a tremble.

"Joseph! Do you think so?"

"Heaven help you, Mrs. Todhetley, for a—a simple woman! We may never see Hugh again."

He caught up the word he had been going to say—fool. Mrs. Todhetley clasped her hands together with a piteous groan, and the shawl slipped off her shoulders.

"I think, madam, you must tell what you can," he resumed, scarcely knowing which to let come uppermost, his anxiety for Hugh or his lofty, scornful anger. "Is the man a relative of yours?"

"No, not of mine.—Oh, Joseph, please don't be angry with me! Not of mine, but of yours."

"Of mine!" cried proud Tod. "Thank you, Mrs. Todhetley."

"His name is Arne," she whispered.

"What!" shouted Tod.

"Joseph, indeed it is. Alfred Arne."

Had Tod been shot by a cannon-ball, he could hardly have been more completely struck into himself: doubled up, so to say. His mother had been an Arne; and he well remembered to have heard of an ill-doing, mauvais sujet of a half-brother of hers, called Alfred, who brought nothing but trouble and disgrace on all connected with him. There ensued a silence, broken only by Mrs. Todhetley's tears. Tod was looking white in the moonlight.

"So, it seems it *is* my affair!" he suddenly said; but though he drew up his head till he looked as tall as the alder-tree under which they stood, all his fierce spirit seemed to have gone out of him. "You can have no objection to speak fully now."

And Mrs. Todhetley, partly because of her unresisting nature, partly in her fear for Hugh, obeyed him.

"I had seen Mr. Arne once before," she began. "It was the same year that I first went home to Dyke Manor. He made his appearance there, not openly, but just as he has made it here now. His object was to get money from the Squire to go abroad with. And at length he did get it. But it put your father very much out; made him ill, in fact; and I believe he took a kind of vow in his haste and vexation, to give Alfred Arne into custody if he ever came within reach of him again. I think—I fear—he always has something or other hanging over his head worse than debt; and for that reason can never show himself by daylight without danger."

"Go on," said Tod, quite calmly.

"One morning I suddenly met him. He stepped right into my path, here at this same spot, as I was about to descend the Ravine, and asked if I knew him again. I was afraid I did. I was afraid he had come on the same errand as before: and oh, Joseph, how thankful I felt that you and your father were away! He told me a long tale, and I thought I ought to try and help him. He was impatient: and the same evening, supposing no one was at home but myself, he came to the dining-room window, wishing to ask if I had already procured the money. Johnny heard him."

"It might have been better that we had been here," repeated Tod. "Better that we should have dealt with him than you."

"Your father was so thankful that you were at school before, Joseph; so thankful! He said he would not have you know anything about Alfred Arne for the world. And so—I tried to keep it this time from both you and him. And, but for this fear about Hugh, I should have done it."

Tod did not answer. He looked at her keenly in the light of the

summer's night, apparently waiting for more. She continued her explanation; not enlarging upon things, suffering, rather, inferences to be drawn.

Alfred Arne asked for fifty pounds. He had returned to England only a few months, had got into some fresh danger, and had to leave it again, and to hide himself till he did so. The fifty pounds—to get him off, he said, and start him afresh in the colonies—he demanded not as a gift, but a matter of right: the Todhetleys, being his near relatives, must help him. Mrs. Todhetley knew but of one person she could borrow it from privately—Mrs. Coney—and *she* had gone from home just as she was about to be asked. Only this afternoon had Mrs. Todhetley received the money from her and paid it to Alfred Arne.

"I would not have told you this, but for being obliged, Joseph," she pleaded meekly. "We can still keep it from your father; better perhaps that you should know it than him: you are young and he is old."

"A great deal better. You have made yourself responsible to Mrs. Coney for the fifty pounds?"

"Don't think of that, Joseph. She is in no hurry for repayment, and will get it from me by degrees. I have a little trifle of my own, you know, that I get half-yearly, and I can pinch in my clothes. I did so hope to keep it from you as well as from your father."

I wondered if Tod saw all the patient, generous, self-sacrificing spirit. I wondered if he was growing to think that he had been always on the wrong tack in judging of his step-mother. She turned away thinking perhaps time was being lost. I said something about Hugh.

"Hugh is all right, Johnny; he'll be found now," Tod answered in a dreamy tone, as he looked after her with a dreamy look. The next moment he strode forward, and was up with Mrs. Todhetley.

"I beg your pardon for the past, mother; I beg it with shame and contrition. Can you forgive me?"

"Oh pray don't, dear Joseph! I have nothing to forgive," she answered, bursting into fresh tears as she took his offered hand. And that was the first time in all his life that Tod, prejudiced Tod, had allowed himself to call her "mother."

And about Hugh? Hugh must wait.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

MARIA GAETANA AGNESI.

ILLUSTRIOUS alike for her genius and for her [virtues, Maria Gaetana Agnesi was born at Milan, in the year 1718. Her father, Don Pietro Agnesi, was Royal feudatory of the domain of Monteviglio, therefore a man of considerable wealth and importance in his native city. The little Maria gave evidence of extraordinary talent at a very early age. She was in the habit of listening attentively while her brothers were repeating their lessons, and such was her power of memory, that she was able to recapitulate them with wonderful precision. At the age when most children are stumbling over the elements of their own language, she had acquired a complete mastery of the Latin tongue, and before she was nine years old had translated, from Italian into Latin, an oration composed by her master.

The names of many of Don Pietro Agnesi's intimate associates are handed down to us ; amongst them we find bishops and other Church dignitaries ; professors, authors, and scientific men ; men of rank and travellers of distinction. In the cool of the evening, after the heat of the Italian summer's day, this learned and refined company was accustomed to assemble in the garden, on the broad marble terraces, or beneath the shade of the trees. Here, on one occasion, a little girl of nine years old, with large forehead, bright dark eyes, and thin, flexible lips, was set in their midst to recite from memory an oration in a dead language, that through the power of her genius had become a living one to her. Unwise as this display of the precocious talents of the little María may have been, she seems to have escaped moral injury. Her Italian biographer, who was intimately acquainted with her from her infancy upwards, speaks of her as having a sweet countenance, refined and modest manners, and an amiable disposition. "She was simple-hearted and noble," he adds, "naturally averse to artifice or affectation." She was of so shy a temperament, that these occasions of display were always a pain to her, and though she showed extraordinary presence of mind for one so young, it was with difficulty she could overcome her natural bashfulness, and submit herself to gratify the wishes of her fond and proud father.

Signor Agnesi's wealth enabled him to obtain the best instruction for his children, and María Gaetana continued to progress in her studies with astonishing rapidity. At nine years of age, she wrote a discourse to prove "that the study of the liberal arts is not incompatible with the understandings of women." This discourse was afterwards printed. At eleven years old she could converse both in Greek and Latin as fluently as in her mother-tongue. But soon an interruption occurred in her studies. In the following year she was seized with a severe illness,

attributed by her medical attendant to over-study and want of exercise. Dancing, and riding on horseback were recommended as a remedy.

Maria Gaetana must have been of an eager, impulsive temperament, flying to extremes in all she did ; for she entered into these diversions with a passionate delight that rendered the benefit to be derived from them nugatory. Excitement upon excitement brought on an attack of a convulsive nature, something of St. Vitus's Dance ; and just at this time she had the misfortune to lose her mother. In order to restore the tone of her health and spirits, Maria was sent into the country, where she was persuaded to use more moderation, both in her studies and recreations, and after a while appears to have thoroughly recovered her robust and vigorous health.

Signor Agnesi, finding the want of a wife's gentle rule at the head of his large family of five daughters and two sons, made up his mind to marry again ; but his second wife, Donna Marianna Pezzi, lived only a few years, dying in 1737, leaving the family increased by two boys.

Maria Gaetana had by this time acquired a proficiency in seven different languages, and now turned her attention to philosophy and the physical sciences, which she cultivated with equal ardour and success.

The second daughter, Maria Theresa, proved herself a musical genius ; she composed several cantatas and three operas, that were much applauded, besides being an accomplished performer on the harpsichord.

The celebrity of those two amiable and talented girls, drew a crowd of visitors to their father's house, and the "Casa Agnesi" became one of the show-places of Milan. Charles de Brosses, Comte de Tournay, writes from that city, that he had the offer of an introduction to the Signora Maria Gaetana Agnesi, but did not feel much inclined to avail himself of it. He changed his mind, however, and accompanied his friend to Signor Agnesi's house. His impression can best be given in his own words :

"I must describe to you, my dear president, a kind of literary phenomenon of which I have just been witness, and which has appeared to me, '*cosa più stupenda*' than Milan Cathedral. At the same time, I must confess that I was nearly caught unprepared. I went to Signor Agnesi's house, where I told you yesterday I was going. We entered a large and handsome apartment, where I found thirty persons of all the nations of Europe ranged in a circle, and Madlle. Agnesi seated alone, with her little sister, upon a sofa. She is a girl from eighteen to twenty years of age, neither plain nor pretty, with gentle and simple manners. Ices were first served, which I took as a good augury. I expected when I went that we were to have an ordinary conversation with this young lady ; instead of that, the Count Belloni, who introduced me, wished to make a sort of public affair of it. He began by addressing her in a fine Latin harangue, in order to be understood by every one. She

answered very well ; afterwards they began to dispute in the same language, upon the origin of springs, and on the ebb and flow of some, similar to the sea. She spoke like an angel upon this subject ; I never heard anything that satisfied me more. After this, Belloni asked me to discuss with her any subject I pleased, provided it was philosophical or mathematical. I was stupefied when I found I had to harangue impromptu, and to speak for an hour in a language I am little accustomed to use. However, I made her a handsome compliment. Then we discussed the manner in which the mind can be affected by material objects, and the mode by which the organs communicate with the brain ; and then upon the emanation of light, and primitive colours. Loppin discussed with her the transparency of bodies, and the properties of certain geometric curves, of which I understood nothing. He spoke in French, and she asked permission to reply in Latin, fearing that the terms of art would not come easily to her in French. She spoke marvellously on all these subjects, for which she was no more prepared than we were. She is much attached to the philosophy of Newton. It is a prodigy to see a person of her age understand such abstract subjects so well. But however much astonished I might be at her learning, I was perhaps still more so in hearing her speak Latin (a language she could surely use but seldom) with such purity, ease, and correctness, that I can safely say I have never read modern Latin written in so good a style as her discourse. After she had replied to Loppin, we rose, and conversation became general. Each person spoke to her in the language of his country, and she replied to each in his own tongue. She told me she was vexed that this visit should have taken the form of an academic disputation ; that she did not like speaking of such things in company, where for one person amused twenty were bored ; and that it was only good amongst two or three of the same tastes. This discourse seemed to me to show as much good sense as the former."

A devout Catholic, with a mind deeply imbued with the doctrines of the Romish Church, shy and retiring in disposition, sated with adulation, and weary of display, Maria Gaetana Agnesi, when scarcely twenty years of age, made up her mind to forsake the world, and to join the religious community of Celestines, or Blue Nuns. It seems that her spiritual director had encouraged her wish for a religious life ; for when she saw the bitter grief of her father in the prospect of her loss, and listened to his commands that she should relinquish this scheme, she appears to have been sorely perplexed between what she considered as conflicting duties. It ended in a compromise. Her father agreed to allow her to wear a semi-religious dress, to give up balls, theatres, and other profane amusements, and to permit her to attend the services of the Church without restraint. In return, she agreed to remain under the paternal roof ; and for the present did not appear to have bound herself by any vow.

In 1739 Don Pietro Agnesi had married for a third time, and his family was eventually increased to twenty-three children, thirteen of whom resided at home. Maria Gaetana had apartments of her own, separated from the bustle of the family circle, where she pursued the even tenor of her way. But though retired from company, she neglected no domestic duty, and instituted herself instructress of the younger children, two of whom, at any rate, Guiseppe and Paola, repaid her care with the most devoted affection.

Maria Gaetana's attention was at this time attracted by an incomplete, or too abstruse, work of De L'Hospital's on Conic Sections, which she set herself to elucidate; and this was followed by her great work, entitled "Analytical Institutions," a work that placed her at once at the head of mathematical science. So highly did the Rev. John Colson, Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, esteem this book, that at an advanced age he studied Italian for the sole purpose of translating Signora Agnesi's work into English. He had previously translated Sir Isaac Newton's treatise on Fluxions, and was familiar with the writings of Emerson, Maclaurin, and Simpson, and yet found the "Analytical Institutions" of Agnesi superior to anything before produced.

Maria Gaetana dedicated this work to Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria. "I am convinced," she says in her dedication, "that every woman ought to exert herself and endeavour to promote the glory of her sex;" and then adds, in words that might have been written by an Englishwoman of the present day: "If at any time there can be an excuse for the rashness of a woman who ventures to aspire to the sublimities of a science which knows no bounds, not even those of infinity itself, it certainly should be at this glorious period, in which a woman reigns, and reigns with universal applause and admiration."

The Empress's letter of thanks was forwarded to Maria Gaetana, enclosed in a crystal casket set with brilliants, accompanied by the present of a valuable diamond ring. But the approbation that, doubtless, Signora Agnesi valued beyond that of the Empress, or even of the different learned societies that hastened to elect her member, was that of Pope Benedict IV. He sent her a present of a gold medal, and a circlet of gold set with precious stones, together with his blessing. He also nominated her Honorary Professor of Mathematics to the University of Bologna, or at least recommended her nomination, which amounts to the same thing.

An anecdote is related, showing how completely her mind was absorbed during the composition of her "Analytical Institutes." Even in her dreams, meditations upon profound mathematical problems pursued her. One night she was asleep; when she suddenly rose from her bed, and in her night-dress, proceeded to her study, where she noted down the solution of a question that had perplexed her for many days;

she then returned to bed. In the morning when she awoke, the solution flashed upon her, and she hastened to dress, and to shut herself in her study, in order to commit it to writing; when, to her extreme surprise, she found, already written out in her own hand, the solution that she believed had only the instant before entered her mind.

This was the culminating point of Maria Gaetana's intellectual progress. Maria's brain was over-wearied, and she again fell ill. The earnest wish to become a nun once more took possession of her mind, though it might be thought that the education of her young brothers and sisters, and her voluminous scientific correspondence, would have bound her to the world and its duties. In the meantime she brought several poor sick people into her apartments to nurse; but her father, either afraid of his daughter's strength giving way, or of infection for the household, forbid this; and Maria, feeling the duty of obedience to her father while she remained under his roof, submitted.

A mortifying circumstance soon after occurred, that shortened Signor Agnesi's life. The second daughter, Maria Theresa, was in the habit of holding music meetings in her father's house; in these concerts Maria Gaetana used to join, playing on the violincello. The music meetings gave rise to some gossip and scandal, how or why is not distinctly seen; probably envy of the popularity of the two young ladies may have had something to do with it. The refusal of an offer of marriage on the part of Maria Theresa, strengthened these malicious reports, whatever they were. Perhaps it was imagined that too great freedom of discussion was allowed at these meetings, for the Governor of Austrian Lombardy, Count Gian Luca Pallavicino, thought it necessary to interfere, and sent for Signor Agnesi to speak to him on the subject. Signor Agnesi does not appear to have been as submissive to correction as might have been wished, for he lost his temper; high words arose, ending in a violent quarrel. This, and the evil reports together, brought on an affection of the chest, of which he died in 1752. It is probable that after this Maria Theresa Agnesi did marry, and leave Milan, as there is no further mention of her name.

Maria Gaetana now found herself free to follow the bent of her inclinations, and from this time entirely withdrew herself from society, devoting herself to religious reading and contemplation, and to attendance on the sick, both at home and in the public hospitals. However much her fanaticism is to be regretted, we cannot withhold our respect from this noble and excellent woman, carrying out in all sincerity, to the very utmost, her conception of duty. Such self-abnegation has something in it of the sublime, even when founded on a mistake. In addition to her devotion to the sick, she pursued a system of the most rigid personal mortification; not only denying herself everything in the shape of pleasure and luxury, but even restricting herself in food and clothes to the merest necessities of existence. All her spare moments

were given to prayer and meditation, the study of the Scriptures, and the Greek and Latin Fathers. It is strange and sad to find, united with a strong soul and a cultivated intellect, so much that is bigoted and narrow. It would seem as if, reasoning profoundly on all other subjects, she had, in matters of religion, laid down her own freedom of thought.

Signora Agnesi soon found her apartments too restricted to accommodate the number of sick people she desired to succour. She determined, therefore, to leave the paternal mansion. She took a house near the Church of St. Bernardo, which she converted into a hospital for forty patients. Another difficulty then presented itself; her private fortune was insufficient for the maintenance of so many, and she had to solicit contributions. Before resorting to this means of raising money, she had sold to an English friend the casket and diamond ring with which the Empress had presented her, but the proceeds were still insufficient to meet the necessities of the case.

Two years of abstinence and excessive toil so far impaired her strength as to render it necessary for her to seek a short interval of repose in the country. On her return, at the urgent instance of her director, she was induced to accept the office of Prioress of the Celestine Nuns, and, by her sweetness and cheerfulness, as well as by her wisdom, she gained the love of the entire Sisterhood. In 1771 she was appointed Visitor and Directress of the Trivilzi Hospital, opened in that year, and some time after she took up her abode there as permanent Directress.

Her exemplary and self-denying life was now drawing to an end. Robust as her constitution had naturally been, it was undermined by continued fasts and vigils. Headaches became frequent. Rheumatic gout attacked her hands and feet; but she still, in spite of pain and weakness, pursued her daily routine, supporting her failing steps with a staff. Her sight became dim, and her weakness gradually increased. At length her mind became clouded, and she contemplated retiring from the Hospital, where she could no longer be of use. But her rest was at hand. One day, on returning from church, she fainted, and was laid on her bed, from which she again never rose. She suffered greatly for some weeks; receiving all the alleviation possible in the assiduous attention of her brother and sister, Giuseppe and Paola, and in their arms peacefully breathed her last on the 9th of January, 1779.

So passed away from the earth one of the most extraordinary women of the age. A woman narrowed and warped indeed by religious fanaticism, but of transcendent genius, incomparable strength, and sweetness of character, and of unbounded charity. She was human, and therefore liable to err; but her steadfast adherence to duty, in the light in which she viewed it, even more than the greatness of her talents, commands our reverence, and renders it a pleasing task to endeavour to rescue from oblivion one who, to use the expression of the late King Leopold, has been "too much forgotten."

“Dora, I suppose you have seen the mysterious box which has been sent to us from America? It is said to contain a valuable diamond ring, and it is to be sold at auction next Saturday evening.”

A CURIOUS STORY.

“**D**ID you ever see Planchette, Mrs. Everett?”

It was in September 1867 that this question was asked, and Planchette was as yet but little known.

“No, but I have heard of it,” Mrs. Everett answered carelessly. “Great nonsense, is it not?”

“I wish I knew. Aunt Margaret brought mine from Germany. I tried it, and found I could write with it, and soon it began to tell me such strange things, that I dared not keep it for a plaything, and so hid it away. Only think, it told me about Harry before we were engaged at all.”

“It answered to your thought, I suppose,” Mrs. Everett said, with a tolerant smile.

“Perhaps so, but it said some things I had never thought of. At any rate, I should like you to try it. I have time to go home for it, and get back before dark. May I? Will you try it with me? Harry won’t come to-night, and we shall have a quiet time.”

“Well, if you don’t mind the walk. We might amuse ourselves in that way as well as another. In the meantime, I’ll have tea made ready, and dress myself in honour of the occasion; but I give you fair warning, no matter what it writes, I shall not believe it.”

Dora Wilson admired Mrs. Everett very much. There was in her a passionate strength and a high-bred repose which no girl of eighteen ever has in combination, and which fascinated this girl. Constance Everett had her own loveliness, too, whose charm had not “passed with the dull years away.” Her eyes had lost some of their old light—smiling eyes they had been once—but they were full, now, of a deep, longing tenderness which had a spell of its own. Her soft, drooping hair was lovely still, even despite the silver threads, and her face had grown clear and fine with suffering. But the young-girl beauty had departed from it for ever; and this same young-girl beauty is what a woman growing toward middle age, who has missed what she most wanted in life, sorrows for, and cannot be comforted because it is not. Mrs. Everett had married early, and soon discovered that she had made a mistake. A few short years of unhappy married life and she was left a widow.

Just before nightfall Dora came back, bringing a box, which she deposited with an air of mysterious importance on the parlour-table, but which she would not open until tea was over.

After tea they returned to the pleasant drawing-room. The lamps

were bright. The soft coal-fire burned brilliantly. The crimson curtains were drawn. Mrs. Everett, all the passion and longing which had looked out of her eyes in the afternoon entirely banished from them now, sat down with an air of superb indifference, under the hanging lamp in the centre of the room, the soft folds of her violet silk falling about her, her filmy handkerchief upon her lap, on which her idle hands were crossed.

Dora's cheeks were pink with excitement. She folded and cut large sheets of paper, and then adjusted her little heart-shaped oracle.

"You will put your hand on it, please. Planchette, I am going to consult you for Mrs. Everett."

Mrs. Everett put out one white hand, lazily—it was the one with her wedding-ring on it—and leaned back in her chair with closed eyes.

Vaguely, at first, the pencil moved over the paper, then more and more swiftly, and at last it began to write very rapidly. At length, with a sudden line drawn quite across the sheet, it stopped, and the paper was pushed towards Mrs. Everett.

"Read it—it is for you," Dora cried, excitedly; and with the same air of indolent indifference, Mrs. Everett opened her eyes and obeyed. But, as she read, the indifference passed away from her manner. Her cheeks grew pale as death; her limbs shook: for this was what she found written:—

"For Heaven's sake, for my soul's sake, accomplish your happiness somehow. I am doomed to wait beside you until you are made happy. I do not love you. I do not want to stay here. But I must watch over you, and care for you, until some one takes my place who feels for you all I ought to have felt and did not."

"JOHN EVERETT."

"Do you know what it says?" Mrs. Everett asked, in tones so constrained and husky, that they fell strangely upon her own ears.

"No," Dora answered.

"Then I had rather you would not. If you please, I will keep this sheet. If these words were not written by some haunting spirit, I know not how they came upon the paper. Let us say no more about it. I think I will go to my room, if you don't mind. I am tired."

Dora noticed how deathly white her face was as the lamp-light shone on it—how cold her lips were when she kissed her good-night. After she had gone out of the room, the girl put Planchette again into her box, and tied her in with a ribbon.

"There you go, whatever you are, good or bad spirit, or no spirit at all; and you won't get out again in a hurry," she said, with a little vexed determination in her voice, as she tied the last knot.

Mrs. Everett drew a chair in front of the fire upon her hearth, and sat down to think. For three years she had believed herself free; but in-

stead, if this strange oracle told the truth, all the time this brooding Presence had been beside her, waiting his time and means to make himself known, and from him she saw no escape. His doom was her doom as well; and it seemed to close round her with the blackness of despair. He was to wait till her happiness was accomplished, a happiness which would never come. Her only hope was in the one sure fate of mortals. Some day she should die; and then the sudden shudder of a new foreboding shook her. Would he be commissioned to haunt her still, when they were both immortal?

She crept to bed, and lay there trembling, till at last sleep came; but it was a feverish sleep, beset with dreams and visions, which brought her little rest.

After this night, watching herself and her life with perhaps a morbid, introverted closeness of observation, she grew slowly conscious, as she believed, of a mysterious influence which changed her plans, and regulated, in spite of her own will, her movements—conscious, too, that the influence seemed to work always for her good. It gave her no sense of tenderness, but only of watchfulness—like a grim nurse who never smiles over her childish charge, or kisses it, but who guards it from danger like an earthly providence.

The atmosphere of this unloved and unloving care was singularly oppressive to her. She grew feverish and restless. At length, in November, she made up her mind to go away from home. Change of place might bring change of pain, if no more. She longed for motion—to see new sights, hear new sounds—and she had, possibly, a childish hope that she might run away from her unseen companion. It might be part of his doom to stay in the old places—who knew?

She grew more cheerful as she packed her trunks; but once on her journey, the old sense of a doom from which she could not escape came over her. She knew as well that the Presence was beside her, as if she could have heard him speak. She hurried from town to town, from hotel to hotel; and she knew that he went with her, watching silently, uncomplaining as unloving.

At last, in the middle of winter, she fell ill in a strange town. Oppressed by this sense of constant and undesired companionship, she had been wasting to a shadow. Her heart beat its funeral march like no muffled drum, but as if terribly in earnest. Now strength failed her utterly, and there was nothing for her to do but to lie still and be ministered unto.

She knew that she must have a physician. There is a sense of the fitness of things which constrains an invalid, who cares ever so little about life, to die decently and in order. By some sense, so new to us as yet, that our language has no word for it, she perceived that something said to her—"Send for Dr. Martin. He is the right one, the only one who can help you."

It was the first time she had ever been conscious of any words from

the haunting Presence at her side, save the one message written by Planchette ; but anything which broke the monotony of that silent watchfulness, seemed to her less terrible than the watchfulness itself. She felt her courage rise ; and to this something, which had spoken, she made answer, with a note of defiance in her tone—"No, I'll not send for him. I'll send for Dr. Wesley. I like his name, and I'll have him."

Half an hour afterwards, her messenger returned, and said to her—
"Dr. Martin will be with you very soon."

"But I did not send for Dr. Martin. I sent for Dr. Wesley."

"Yes, madam, but Dr. Wesley is out of town, and Dr. Martin takes his patients."

Just then, through that strange, unnamed sense, she was conscious of an eerie laugh, a laugh of ghostly triumph. She felt as if her fate were being taken quite out of her own hands. It had made no difference whether she sent for Dr. Martin or Dr. Wesley. Nothing she could do would make any difference, probably. As well give up all further attempt to contend with this power, whatever it might be, which was settling her ways for her.

In fifteen minutes more Dr. Martin was shown into the room.

He had a singular face. Her very first thought about him was that he looked like a man who could see ghosts. He had wonderful eyes—black, large, far-seeing, and full of smouldering fire. His long, black hair fell carelessly about a massive, strong forehead. His nose expressed pride and refinement. His lips were firm and sweet. He came in with the air of a man perfectly at ease in his position ; and waiting a moment until they were alone, sat down by Mrs. Everett's side, and took her feverish hand.

"Now," he said, looking with a kind of compelling power into her eyes, "first of all, I want you to tell me the whole cause of this highly nervous state in which I find you ; otherwise I cannot help you."

She looked at him a moment in return, gathering confidence as she looked, and feeling strangely impelled to confide in him entirely. But, at last, she asked a question, instead.

"Can you exorcise a ghost ?"

He gazed at her then more intently than before. Was this a mad woman whom he had been sent for to cure ? No. Her eyes had no baleful fire in them. They were sadder than any eyes he had ever seen, but calm as they were sad. He determined to answer her as seriously as she had spoken.

"I have never tried my power in that direction, and I do not know what I could do. I have never seen a ghost. Have you ?"

"No, but I have felt the power of one."

And then she told him her story.

He listened with grave seriousness. When she ceased speaking, he said :

"Dr. Wesley would have laughed your ghost to scorn, Mrs. Everett, and given you iron to take. He is the most determined unbeliever in the supernatural I ever knew. But I am not prepared precisely to follow his course. Your story, as you tell it, gives me a curious impression of reality. May I ask you one more question?"

"Yes."

"Did this man wrong you in any way, or can you account, on any theory of probability, for his being doomed to watch over you, when he is not drawn to you by love?"

"No, I do not think he wronged me. Our marriage was a mutual mistake. Perhaps he was the first to find this out; but that was scarcely his fault."

Just then she stopped, and a singular expression crossed her face. She wore the look of an absorbed listener. She motioned Dr. Martin to silence, and for a moment neither spoke.

Then she asked—"Did you hear anything?"

"No."

"It is not hearing, exactly, but I was as conscious as I could be of anything you should say to me, that the ghost was giving me his explanation of his doom. He says his sin was in being purely selfish, in caring nothing for what I had to suffer, while he brooded sullenly upon his own disappointment. For that reason he must watch over me now, and wait for his happiness until I have found mine."

Dr. Martin heard her through, in silence.

"This may be true," he said, after a thoughtful pause. "I have heard things as strange testified to by witnesses so unimpeachable that I was not left at liberty to doubt."

"If his presence were a help and a comfort to me," she said slowly, "it would all be reasonable enough. But when I had so longed to escape from him, to have him sent back after death to prolong my torture seems strange mercy."

"May it not be," Dr. Martin suggested gently, "that there is a lesson for you, as well as for him? He is to earn his happiness by trying to help you to yours. May it not be, on your part, that you are to learn *not* to long to escape from him—to learn gratitude and toleration for him, instead? I think sometimes, that all creation will be out of harmony so long as any two of the Father's children hate each other. Let us hope that, now you have shared your secret with me, you will feel less oppressed by this constant Presence. I will give you nothing more than a soothing draught to-night, and see you again in the morning."

That night, for the first time for months, Mrs. Everett slept. Was it that the doctor's draught was a veritable elixir of life; or was it the inexplicable relief which grew out of sharing her secret with another? At any rate, she slept as peacefully as a child: and when she woke in the morning, no sense of ghostly companionship oppressed her.

"Did I exorcise the ghost?" the doctor asked, on his early visit.

"Possibly. At any rate, he has not troubled me."

"And you slept?"

"I slept."

She gave him a cool hand, and the pulse on which he pressed his fingers beat evenly. He looked into her face, which her tranquil rest had refreshed, and just then began to realize that she was a very interesting woman. About her beauty, perhaps, most men would be likely to use the past tense; but for him it had lost none of its attraction, through the years that had left, in lieu of every charm they stole, something subtler and finer.

There was not much for medicine to do in her case, it struck him. The strength which a nameless dread had sapped, must be built up slowly. The great thing to be accomplished was, to divert her thoughts from the one subject on which they had so long and so morbidly dwelt—to make her feel that, however real her ghostly visitant might be, there was nothing terrible about him, commissioned as he was to right wrongs instead of to commit them.

Dr. Martin had dabbled somewhat in psychology, and Mrs. Everett seemed to him the most interesting study he had ever met. He was not ready to throw away his opportunities, though he had too much honesty to give her medical attendance which she did not need. So, as coolly as if it were the simplest and most common thing in the world for a doctor to make unprofessional visits, he said:

"Your illness is not of such a nature as to require a physician's frequent attendance. When you do need me in a medical capacity, I will come in it; but if you will allow me, I will come daily, during your stay here, as a friend; and together, we will see if we cannot keep your intimate enemy from troubling you. I confess the whole thing interests me intensely, and with your permission, I should like to see it through."

Constance Everett was too unconventional, and too much in earnest, to find anything strange in this proposal, which was just such an one as she would have made herself, had the case been reversed.

She thanked him cordially; and it became a settled thing that, after his morning round of visits was over, he should go to her for an hour or more, as time served him.

The advantage of this new and pleasant companionship made itself felt at once. Mrs. Everett grew more cheerful. The tone of her mind seemed restored. She could eat and sleep. She became able to interest herself once more in art, and literature, and music, and the affairs of the great world around her. But if Dr. Martin had expected to pursue his acquaintance with the ghost, he was certainly disappointed. His patient seemed to herself to be delivered from the haunting presence, which had accompanied her so long. At least, if still it watched and waited, it made no sign.

Dr. Martin, on his part, found himself looking forward to these daily visits of his, as he had seldom looked forward to anything before. It was like entering a new world, after a morning spent in listening to the querulous complaints of his patients, to go into the quiet room where was only peace, where always flowers bloomed, and a fair, graceful woman, simply clad, and all unconscious of her own charm, waited with eyes growing every day more glad to bid him welcome.

He brought to her all that was best in himself—his professional ambition, his philanthropy, his tastes—and there was nothing in which he failed of her comprehension or her sympathy.

Day by day she grew stronger and brighter. If she had been a vainer woman, she might herself have seen how the glow and glory of her lost youth were creeping back into her face. But perhaps her unconsciousness was not her least grace. She thought of herself still as a woman older than her years, saddened by the long hunger of her life, powerless to win anything for which she pined; but even in spite of this, life began to grow a brighter thing to her. She felt that it was not impossible that sometime, in and of herself, and quite apart from outside influences, she might be happy. Then, surely, even if he had not gone already, the Presence would depart from her life.

With her returning strength she began to think of going home. "Winter's rains and ruins were over," and a breath of Spring was in the air as well as in her heart.

A few times Dr. Martin drove her out into the country, where wild flowers were springing under the hedges, where the brooks babbled, and the tender, green leaves were sprouting from the trees.

On one of these drives she told him that next week she had planned to go home. He made no remonstrance, for he saw clearly that there was nothing which could reasonably be urged against her intention. Her health had improved wonderfully. She seemed as likely to live now, as three months before she had seemed to die. Her own home, in the pleasant suburbs of a large city, was at once a more suitable and more attractive place for her, now that the spring days were growing long. She had been a pleasant friend to him, but the time had come when they must part. Dr. Martin had passed through partings enough, in the thirty-five years which had left him alone in the world, not to make much ado about this one.

It came hardest on her, Mrs. Everett thought, when she saw his composure. She had been to him a patient, in the singularity of whose case he took a personal interest. He had been to her doctor and friend in one. Well, at any rate, parting time had come, and she had to thank him for having made of her life such a different thing from what it had been when she knew him first. All this strength and courage, with which she looked out now upon the world, were of his planting.

When the day of her departure arrived, he took her to the station.

They were silent during the short drive, for the most part. How is it that the thousand last things one has to say will never get themselves said under such circumstances? At length, just as they neared the station, she put into his hand a card, on which she had written out her address.

"Will you come some time?" she asked, and waited for his answer with an eagerness which flushed her cheeks and brightened her eyes.

"Thank you, yes—the very first vacation I am able to take."

"If you do not forget me in the meantime," she said, with just the least little touch of womanly spleen, because she had persuaded herself that she was feeling their parting more acutely than he did.

"Yes, if I do not," very coolly. "But I have a long memory for most things and most people."

The train was almost due. There were five minutes of confusion, during which he had purchased her ticket, found her a seat on the shady side, and said good-bye. Then, from the window of the train which whirled her away, she watched him till he seemed but a speck.

Was it all, all over? Would she see him again some time, or never any more? *He* had taken it all quietly enough, she thought; but somehow *she* did not find it exhilarating.

Her spirits began to rise, however, as she neared her home. She found it bright with spring, well kept and well cared for by the faithful woman whom she had left in charge; and she found, waiting to welcome her, Dora—who was Dora Wilson no longer, but a very pretty little Mrs. Preston indeed.

"You see, after all, I did think of you when I was with my lover," Dora said, holding up her face to be kissed.

"When you were with your husband, dear—a slightly different thing," Mrs. Everett retorted, with a sort of half-sad satire in her voice.

"Not with me," Dora cried earnestly. "We are more lovers than ever, as you will see; for you'll have to see a good deal of us. And Harry has a brother, whom you must see, too. He is with us, on a visit. He is Colonel Preston, and he has on his cheek the scar of a sabre-wound—a real hero."

Mrs. Everett looked into Dora's transparent little face and laughed.

"You are an astute match-maker," she said. "Could not you be a married woman, dear, without taking on the worst faults of your order?"

Dora blushed.

"No, I'm not a match-maker—only the colonel is in his thirties, and Harry and I have thought sometimes that you would just charm him; and you couldn't help liking him, I know; so what sin would it be if it should happen to prove that you were made for each other?"

"No sin in life, little matron; only there's nothing in the world less likely to happen. I'm not at all sure, now, that I can't be happy without love. It no longer seems to me the only thing in the world."

"Well, you'll see him this evening, at any rate. Harry is going to bring him. Harry said it wasn't fair to call when you had just got here, but I overruled him. I felt sure you wouldn't mind."

Mrs. Everett found herself making her toilet, that evening, with real interest; and when all was done, she looked a lovely lady, in the trailing violet silk she was so fond of wearing, with cobweb laces at throat and wrists, and a few bright ribbons drooping low in her dusky hair. Dora's young-girl beauty paled before the ripe charm of this mature woman, to whom years of suffering had taught so many lessons.

And yet Dora was very pretty, too, in her own way; and her bright face grew yet brighter when the door-bell rang, and her big, good-natured giant of a husband came in with his soldier-brother.

The two men, whom Mrs. Everett was preparing to find as like as two peas, were, in fact, very different. Colonel Preston was both slighter and darker than his brother. There was a look of command in his clear eyes. His even voice, too, had something of force in it, to which it seemed natural to yield, though his tones were low and quiet. His features were clear in their outline, and his lithe figure promised strength and endurance—"a born soldier," one would have said, to look at him.

He conversed chiefly with Mrs. Everett; for the time was not over, for Dora and her big husband, when they liked best to entertain each other.

What he said was not so much as the manner in which he said it. They talked about many things; but when Mrs. Everett tried, afterwards, to recall what had passed, she saw that he had rather drawn her out than expressed his own opinions. Yet on one or two vital points he had spoken strongly. There was in his manner a blending of deference towards her, as a woman, and respect for himself, as a man, which seemed to her a rare combination. Then, with all his strength, he did everything more gently than other men. He had a habit of alert and minute attention to details, the result of his military training, possibly. His eyes were everywhere. No trifle was wanting to her comfort that he did not instantly perceive it. He drew a screen between her face and the fire; he turned her music; he handed her tea-cup; but all with a certain grave gentleness, as far as possible removed from the bearing of a squire of dames. When he went away, she was obliged to confess to herself that Dora's soldier brother-in-law was a success.

He became, after that night, quite a frequent visitor. At first Dora usually came with him. Then he began to go over alone in the mornings, while his little sister-in-law was busy, to hear Mrs. Everett sing; and finally it came about that, on one pretext or another, he made daily visits, and almost always made them alone.

It was inevitable that Constance Everett should contrast him, sometimes, with the other friend who had also been a daily visitor, and who

seemed to have worked in her behalf some strange miracle of healing. They were both good men and true, but alike in scarcely one thing. Both had power, but it was Dr. Martin's nature to take a good deal for granted—to carry matters with a high hand. Colonel Preston persuaded, with that low, even voice of his, and she could not tell to which it was hardest to say no. Sometimes she wondered how much or how little either of them cared for her. From Dr. Martin she had never heard one word since they parted that spring day; but, if looks and tones went for anything, he had surely been something warmer and closer to her than her physician. Colonel Preston was her friend; but would he, would any man, care to be more than that, considering the many tears that had washed the colour and brightness from her life?

At last the Colonel solved her doubts, by asking her in so many words to be his wife. His leave of absence was almost out, and he wanted to take her away with him.

She had so little vanity, that the proposal came to her as a surprise, and she asked a few days to consider it. That he loved her, his strong, manly words left her no room to question; and no one can guess how temptingly sweet this knowledge was, save a woman, no longer young, who has fancied herself past her time for winning love.

But what did she feel for him? She had made one grand mistake in her life—let her not make another.

She admired and appreciated Colonel Preston. She was proud of his devotion. Why did it not stir her pulses? Why, her heart had beat a quicker tune when Dr. Martin came in to make his professional visits—Dr. Martin who did not love her at all. Would any one ever love her, if she sent this true heart away? How could she decide?

While these doubts tormented her, she became conscious, for the first time for months, that the ghost, influence, spirit—choose what term you will—had not left her. He was there still—always watching, never tender. She felt him in the very air; and the voice which before, in some occult way, had penetrated her senses, came to her again; saying, this time, over and over, only one word—“*Beware!*”

Beware of what?—lest she should throw away the only chance life held for her, in rejecting this love, so much more noble and generous than she had ever expected to win—or beware lest she made another mistake in accepting it? She did not know; and question how she might, only the one word came in answer.

At last, one morning, she sent her little hand-maiden with a note for Dora. As a last resort she had thought of Planchette. She wrote to beg Dora to bring it over, and try for her once more. Little, matronly Mrs. Dora returned with the messenger, bringing her Pandora's box in her hand.

“Then you have ceased to shrink from my black witch, dear Mrs.

Everett?" she asked, as she untied the ribbon she had knotted in that same drawing-room so many months ago.

"Yes, I shrink from nothing so much as the responsibility of my own actions."

Planchette was coy. She drew some circles, a cross, a star. When at last she wrote, her words were few:—

"You should know, by this time, what your heart needs. If you are not satisfied that you have found it—wait. If you are satisfied—well."

Constance Everett read the few words twice over: and then folding the paper, put it into her pocket.

"Is it enough, dear?" Dora ventured to ask.

"It must be. I should get nothing more if I tried all day. Thank you."

"I think you have been asked to be my sister. The Colonel has not told me, but I guess it. Will it come to that? You know how more than happy it would make *me*."

"Ask me after to-morrow; not now."

And so mistress Dora carried her Planchette away unsatisfied; and Constance Everett was left alone, feeling that her mystery was still unsolved.

She continued to feel so until the next day, when Colonel Preston came for his answer. Then she spoke to him upon an impulse, and without hesitation, but out of her most secret and profound consciousness.

"I hoped I could love you," she said, "because I esteem and trust you so entirely, and I long for love so much. It has been the one thing I have missed, and starved for all my life. I thought I could feel it for almost any good man who cared for me; but I have found my mistake. I admire you, am proud of you, and grateful to you beyond words, for your tenderness; but I do not love you."

Colonel Preston had never been more tender or gentle with her than just then. With all his pride, he was too humble, as well as too manly and too unselfish, to be angry, and too strong and brave himself to make her task harder by any weak complaints.

"Thank you," he said, "that you have been true enough to your own instincts to understand yourself, and deal honestly with me. It is bitter enough to give you up; but not so bitter as it would be to be your husband, and not have your love."

So he went away from her, her friend; and the next day he left town.

Then, when it was all over, the reaction came, and she suffered keenly. What she had longed for all her life had been just within her grasp; for, at least, this man had loved her truly. And now he was gone.

In the midst of this mood of discontent and despondency, Dr. Martin came to her.

"Did you send for me? Did you want me?" he asked, with his first greeting.

"At any rate, I did not expect you," she said, smiling.

"But I think you sent for me. I felt your messenger's presence. He gave me no peace. It was not a convenient time for me to come, but I came. Do you need me, now I am here? Have you wanted me?"

The reason why she had been unable to love Colonel Preston dawned just then upon Mrs. Everett.

"Yes, I believe I *have* wanted you. I did not let myself think about it; but the want was there."

"And I felt it, and I am here," he cried, triumphantly; "and now *I* want *you*. Did you know when you went away from me that I loved you?"

"No—you did not tell me—how should I?"

"For your own sake I kept silence. I understood myself well enough. I knew I should never marry any other woman, but I would not take advantage of the circumstances. You had seen no one else for all those months, and you thought I had done you good. It seemed to me it would be so easy for you to take friendship and gratitude for something deeper, that you might make another mistake with your life, if I told you what I felt for you then. When you had been quite away from me for awhile, I thought you could be sure of yourself; but you were too dear for me to let you run any risks. I meant to have waited yet longer before coming to you; but, as I told you, your messenger summoned me. And now I am here, and I love you, *love* you."

She looked doubtfully for a moment into his eager eyes.

"Are you *sure*?" she asked, softly. "I am not young any more. Sorrow has eaten away the best years of my life, and turned my hair gray, and stolen all that might have pleased you once. Are you sure?"

"I am sure. Just such as you are, you are more to me than any ten-years-ago self of yours could have been. However radiant she was, she could never have rivalled this woman whom I love to-day."

She felt his arms close round her, claiming her. Content which was measureless, filled her heart. Looking into his eyes, in the fulness of her peace, she whispered:

"Thank God, I am happy!"

And a voice like an echo, strange, hollow, unearthly, sighed after her—"Thank God, I am free!"

A sound like the rush of wings was in the room, and then silence; and they both felt that the weird watch of the waiting spirit was over.

THE CANTOR'S TRIUMPH.*

(Translated from the German.)

IT was an autumn evening, about the year 1732, and the town of which I write was called Leipzig. It was surrounded by deep ditches, high walls, and stately lime-trees : the houses were almost all high and narrow, with curiously pointed gables, and little towers on some of the roofs. The lights shone brightly on this October day in the house of the "Cantor" of the celebrated "Thomas School," which was close to the finest church in Leipzig. In a narrow room, furnished with large, dark presses and curiously fashioned chairs, at a massive oak table, sat a man dressed in a decorous suit of black, and a voluminous but somewhat rough periuke. His countenance was fresh and blooming ; a grave cheerfulness played round the corners of his firm mouth ; his splendid forehead was high and transparent, but the glance of his fiery black eyes had a power—a force—whose influence few men could withstand. This man was the "Cantor," *Johann Sebastian Bach*, celebrated through the whole country for his magnificent organ-playing. But the worthy burghers also said he was a strange fellow, whom nobody could understand ; and often they shook their wise heads suspiciously at his intricate vagaries and incomprehensible phantasies on the organ. Still not one of them could leave the church when the Cantor began to play ; one shudder after the other thrilled through the souls of the hearers ; for the sounds swelled and resounded as if they would burst the church walls and bury the groups of poor, weak men under the tottering towers.

On the Cantor's right hand sat a woman of a comely figure, mild good features, and gentle eyes, snow-white cap, and spotless neckerchief. She held her youngest son, Christopher, on her lap, while some other sturdy urchins nestled close to her, munching roasted apples, and playing with their baby-brother. Bach's eldest son, Friedeman, a manly youth, resembling the father, but without his mild benevolence, stood close to the immense stove, and looked on thoughtfully at the noisy group of little ones. A younger and slighter man had taken his place on the Cantor's left ; he was well-dressed and had thick black hair, while his brown, amiable face, bore a strong resemblance to the marked features of the head of the family. This was Bach's second son, Philip Emanuel, who was present only as a visitor, for he had come after a long and tedious journey from the town of Frankfort-on-the-Oder to surprise the

* The office of Cantor, in Germany, is somewhat equivalent to the leader of a choir, but it embraces other duties also, and requires a highly accomplished musician, besides conferring a higher rank than would be understood by the term "Chormaster" in this country.

loved ones at home. He had just been telling his father about the new Academy of Music, which he had instituted in Frankfort, and conducted with great success; and about the industry and talents of his pupils. He now timidly drew some manuscript music from his pocket, and colouring, pushed it towards the Cantor. It was a clever sonata, which old Bach scanned carefully: then folding it up, he said in a cheery voice, "We shall make something of you yet, my boy! Continue to work industriously and with God's help! Friedeman also gets on well, plays by no means badly; I shall live to have much joy in you both."

Just then was heard the sound of horses' hoofs, and a loud knocking at their little hall-door. In a few minutes a postillion appeared, exhausted and spattered with mud; he came direct from the Electoral Palace at Dresden, and demanded speech with the Cantor Sebastian Bach, to whom he delivered a letter from the powerful and dreadful Prime Minister, Count Brühl. The Cantor drew the large oil-lamp nearer, and shading his eyes with his hand, read, while Philip Emanuel politely offered the man a chair.

"MY DEAR CANTOR,—Our gracious Elector and Lord, August of Saxony and Poland, desires to hear you, the well-known and celebrated organ-player, Sebastian Bach, at his capital. You are therefore to play in the chapel at Dresden, on Sunday the 24th of October. Two days after receipt of this letter, a royal carriage will convey you from Leipzig to the Capital, where we await you with eagerness. Prepare yourself, my dear Cantor, for the great honour in prospect. Commissioned by my gracious Master, I greet you." BRÜHL."

For some time Bach stood there silently; scorn and indignation struggled in his features, and his eyes wandered uneasily from one dear face to the other; Friedeman and Philip were modestly silent.

"Sir Courier," said the Cantor at last, slowly but firmly, "acquaint the Prime Minister, that I, Sebastian Bach, Cantor of the Thomas School at Leipzig, will obey my Prince's command."

"May I beg for a written document?" interrupted the courier.

"Man!" thundered Sebastian Bach, drawing himself up to his full height, "what do you *dare* to ask? Did you not understand me? have not I, Sebastian Bach, given my word? do you take me for one of those false scoundrels at Court whom, forsooth, a miserable scrap of paper binds more than a man's word spoken in the sight of God?"

"Dear father!" said Philp Emanuel soothingly.

"Silence, youngster! You understand nothing about it," interrupted the father hastily. Then turning to the courier he said more quietly: "You have your answer, and you may repeat every word to the Count, for what I care!"

The messenger started back a few steps, pale and terror-stricken, but Bach drew him forward by his collar and said in a friendly voice:

"Bah! Won't that be a wholesome lesson for you? And don't forget it when you leave my house. And now it will give me great pleasure if you will sit down and help us with our supper."

But the courier took a hasty leave, and the Cantor resumed his place cheerfully. They all crowded anxiously round him, and Frau Gertrude cried! "Alas! my Bastian!—and you will go into the wide world—away to Dresden, amidst the grandeur and magnificence of that sinful city! My husband, for the sake of your wife and children, do it not!" Here she burst into tears, and the children, seeing their mother weep, began their lamentations, while the two sons found fault with the Count's letter.

At last the Cantor's full powerful voice subdued the tumult, and he cried: "Wife, take those wild boys into the nursery; only Friedeman and Philip are to remain here." Therewith he freed himself by a mighty shake from the screaming throng, while the mother carried the little flock off to the old nurse, and then returned alone.

"You must not torment yourself so much about the long journey, Gertrude," said he gently to her. "You will see that, God willing, I will be back in my old nest in a fortnight. Besides, I intend to take Friedeman and Philip with me to the Capital; they also shall see the Vanity Fair yonder, and, above all things, take care of their father. Yes, children," continued he, "we will for once knock at the hearts of these worldlings with the pure, grand voice of God," so he sometimes called his beloved organ. "Maitre Hasse shall acknowledge that there are higher, holier sounds, than the sweet voluptuous melodies of sunny Italy!"

He seemed almost inspired, while saying these words, and his family regarded him with an expression of unbounded reverence. But soon he looked up cheerfully, and cried: "Now, mother, let the squallers in again, and bring us the soup."

On the following day, the Cantor went to the Rector to procure the necessary permission for an important journey. It was a tiresome task for him, for he always avoided his superior as much as possible. Rector and Cantor were never very great friends. The former complained bitterly of his subordinate's rude behaviour and restless temperament, and Bach used often angrily to call the Rector a godless, withered up old pedant. His soul was as withered and dried up as his body; it was buried and sunk in the thick dust of mouldy book-learning. He could never enjoy even a bright flower, for he counted the petals, investigated the calyx, and then threw it away. He never paid any attention to the merry birds, or other creatures, except to make poisonous experiments on them, which was his greatest delight. All mankind was equal to him, for he cared for nobody. His eccentric Cantor's organ-playing he called diabolical, and shut his heart against its influence, therefore, he never attended the early service, and even spread the report that it was the Fiend himself who blew the bellows when Bach played.

Bach now entered the tyrant's study in a somewhat excited state, for he had just finished a rehearsal of the choir, at which he had become rather impatient, and, as often happened in such cases, his wig wore a very distracted aspect. The Rector raised himself in his leather arm-chair, and fixing his little grey eyes on the intruder, said majestically : "Well, Sir Cantor, what troublesome business has brought you?"

"Nothing troublesome, Sir Rector," returned Bach ; "I wished to inform you that I must take a long journey to-morrow, by the Elector's command : and, therefore, want you to give me a fortnight's leave."

"What do I hear?" cried the Rector, breathless with astonishment and anger. "A long journey?—must—Elector—and *I* am not to be consulted? Bah! Cantor, this is some joke, planned by your imaginative genius. Why should Elector August—"

"I am to play the organ at Dresden," said the Cantor, quietly interrupting the speaker ; "the Elector has ordered it so."

"That seems a very improbable story," said the Rector with a sneer. "I must tell you Cantor, in plain terms, that I cannot spare you for the next month ; perhaps, later, there may be no hindrance."

During this malicious speech, Bach's expressive countenance showed no signs of anger or excitement ; he never took his wonderful eyes off his impish opponent, and an indescribable, pitying smile played about his mouth. At last he said firmly, "Sir Rector! be pleased to give me a decided answer. Will you allow me a fortnight's holiday?"

"No, no, and for the last time, *no!*" screamed the other, furiously.

"Very well ! Then I will take it without permission." So saying the Cantor turned and left the room with a firm step, never once looking back at his frantic enemy.

The Sunday afternoon on which Cantor Bach, from Leipzig, had promised to play the organ, such an assemblage of elegant men and women had seldom been seen, as was now gathered together in the beautiful Roman Catholic Church at Dresden. The countless cavaliers in glittering courtier's dress, the brilliant ladies in satins and jewels, or with the still more charming ornament of blooming youth, formed a circle, in whose midst towered the royal form of August of Saxony. The prince's figure was still unbent, his head erect as ever, but age had begun to tell in the sunken cheeks ; and the fire of those large eyes was extinguished, while the delicate outline of nose and mouth alone showed traces of former beauty. August was engaged in a whispered conversation with his favourite Brühl, who stood by his side, and seemed to listen with every appearance of respect to his master's words. Unsubdued pride was marked on that wise brow ; insatiable ambition gleamed from those restless eyes, and an unbounded love of power palpitated in the thin lips.

"And so the droll Cantor would not on any account come to Court yesterday evening," whispered the Elector, laughingly. "Well, I will

tortment him all the more to-day ; when the concert is over, I will send for him."

Brühl bowed silently. "We are all very curious to see this famous organist," continued the Prince; "excitement shows itself in every face ; Hasse has his thick eye-brows expectantly raised, and even the bewitching Faustina is looking about the church with as many restless glances, as if she feared to discover a rival. But hush ! three figures have just made their appearance in the gallery. Do you see, Brühl ? Two very young men are taking their places. What fresh, ingenuous faces they have ! "

"Please your Highness, they are the Cantor's two elder sons," returned Brühl.

At this moment, a sound rose up from the organ, like heavenly incense, purifying every heart from vain thoughts ; a deep silence reigned around ; an indescribable feeling of devotion thrilled through all, and every eye glanced upwards. A splendid prelude, modulating like a golden stream, on whose brink grow heavenly flowers, bore the trembling soul on mighty waves, higher and higher, into the all-powerful, swelling choral, "Our God's a fortress firm and sure." Father Bach made this proud Evangelical psalm swell and resound from the organ-loft, accompanying every note with a beatified smile ; for now, in a Catholic place of worship, he celebrated at this moment, the triumph of his own beloved Church. Like a crowned singer, the sublime melody swelled through the aisles, and resounded mightily, as if countless unseen angelic choirs joined in the song of praise. But the harmony still swelled in an unbroken stream ; the spirit of Father Bach rose higher and higher ; the thrilling sounds became holier, more wonderful. A giant-like, unfathomable voice from above dived down into the ocean of melody ; it roared stronger and more powerfully ; it beat against every heart and stormed round every head, as if it would o'erwhelm them in its waves. And then the church pillars began to tremble, for it seemed as though the plaintive voices of whole generations had risen up crying for mercy—as if the whole world prayed for forgiveness. But, in the midst, rose again, like incense from pious altars, the melody "Our God's a fortress firm and sure!" And then began again that mysterious roaring, as if in answer to the prayers of believing love. But at last, at last, the imploring voices seemed to sink ; softer and lower became their lamentations : more uncertain their petitions ; and then, like a miracle, came the sweet pardon. The high church-dome seemed to melt away ; heavenly streams of blue and golden light gushed in ; an intoxicating incense and the breath of spring filled the lofty aisles ; a righteous wonder, a pious rejoicing, trembled in the pure, holy sounds, and, at length, like millions of beatified human voices, interwoven with jubilant angels' hallelujahs, rose, all-mighty, all-powerful the radiant, victorious psalm, "Our God's a fortress firm and sure."

The tones of the organ were hushed. Johann Sebastian Bach still sat on the organ-bench with clasped hands, a celestial radiance round his countenance. His two sons stood near him, pale from excitement and trembling with delight at the victory won by their adored father.

A subdued murmur rose from the church below, and at that moment the door of the organ-loft opened to admit the Elector, who was followed at a respectful distance by his glittering train. August of Saxony approached, almost hesitatingly, that grand man, who yet sat humbly before him, so sunk in pious dreams as not to have noticed his presence. He scarcely dared venture to break in on that prayerful meditation, but at length he laid his hand gently on Bach's shoulder.

The Cantor started, rose up and looked earnestly at his Prince, with an open, smiling countenance; how powerless was worldly influence, or earthly magnificence, to move the musician's great soul in this moment of inspiration, still filled as it was with the splendour of that Godhead into whose Heaven he had soared on the wings of melody! Words, even, seemed to come to him with difficulty, and after a long pause he said gently, "Gracious Prince, I can see that the blessed 'voice of God,' has also sunk deeply into your heart. Say, is it not a wondrous feeling and yet also a strange fearfulness and trembling? Did it not seem to you as if all around had become sunshine? Did it not urge you on to behold vaster, grander worlds than this little handful of earth, on which we were born? Does not all earthly splendour fall to nothing before the blinding magnificence yonder, and did you not wish to give your whole life and soul to that 'voice of God,' that it might bear you to the source of everlasting light?"

"Bach," answered the Prince, in an agitated voice and coming close to him, "as I listened to your playing, a foreboding of my approaching end came over me. But the thought appeared to my soul in the form of a mild spirit; it had lost all its terrors; I did not tremble at its aspect as formerly, when meditating in the silent hours, on the dark problem of man's dissolution. Master! oh! that I may hear you in my mortal hour!"

Bach answered not a word, but regarded his agitated sovereign with eyes full of tender emotion. His pious heart enjoyed at this moment a greater triumph than that of his art alone. Just then a rustling was heard at the door and a woman pressed eagerly through the throng of courtiers; a woman in the bloom of youth; a voluptuous, proud figure, with the head of a Juno. It was *Faustina Hasse*, the celebrated singer and adored favourite of the entire capital. With the passionate fervour of an Italian, glowing and weeping, she rushed up to the Cantor and falling on his neck, kissed him eagerly on both cheeks amid unbroken sobs. "Blessed, ever blessed art thou, O dazzling Genius!" cried she, her voice trembling with excitement. Bach scarce knew what to do, and the lookers-on smiled; but Hasse came up, and gently drawing his wife

away, introduced himself, and pressed the great Master's hands with an unfeigned expression of reverence. Even the gay French scoffer and philosopher, Marchaud, stepped forward; but instead of the mocking smile that habitually played round his lips, his eyes showed traces of inward emotion, as he silently clasped the musician's hand to his breast. The Elector's attendants soon followed the favourite's example, and the most charming court ladies were not far behind, but with their beautiful hands, touched the cheeks or even a finger of the Cantor, and the loveliest lips murmured their thanks. But the Master suddenly with a giant's strength tore himself away from them all, and in a voice that thunderingly resounded through the vaulted roof, cried, "Enough! Such soft caresses and trifling should not be the reward of holy, earnest organ-playing! Away from me, ye enticing forms; I will see you no more! I long to be back in my dear, quiet house with wife and children, far from all the beautiful flowers, or serpents, of your voluptuous Dresden! Most gracious Prince," he cried, turning beseechingly to the Elector, who looked on at the scene with a sorrowful smile, "let me go! You can see that old Sebastian Bach is out of place here; he could never swim with this current!"

"I shall not let you go until you ask of me some favour," answered the Prince, kindly.

"You can grant me nothing, my Prince," returned the Cantor, bluntly. "I am richer than you; but I thank you."

"Think of your sons," continued the Prince, gently.

"Well, yes, your Highness, if you could do something for Friedeman" (drawing the blushing youth towards him) "I should be very glad. But not for the next two years; at present the youngster is necessary to myself, for he is a good engraver, and we are working at the Passion Masse. My Philip" (nodding to his second son) "is already provided for by Almighty God; he will be all right. So I thank you with all my heart, most gracious Elector."

The Prince let him go with many brilliant promises for Friedeman's future; and at parting gave his hand to father and sons, assuring them of his protection. The highest noblemen vied with each other in speeding the travellers on their journey, and accompanied the worthy Leipzig Cantor to his carriage with as many marks of respect and reverence as if he had been the mightiest ruler in the world.

“UNDER LOCK AND KEY.”

IN these days of promiscuous writing and publishing, it is something remarkable to lay hold of a good book of fiction. Three-fourths of those with which the public get deluged are bad. And the word “bad,” we beg to state, is not here used as applying to their manners and morals, but simply to their unreadability. Few of us—save the inveterate novel-devourer, or a miss-in-her-teens fresh home from school, who sees beauties in every romance alike, provided it has plenty of love-making in it—can take up one in twenty of the works of the present day with the smallest hope of deriving pleasure or satisfaction from them. So that when a really good book (in the sense of its interest and readability) is met with, it seems as a very boon. Not within the province of this paper does it come, to inquire into the cause of this state of things. That a tirade of inane, miserable rubbish, intruding its barefaced worthlessness through three whole volumes (though often very short ones in respect to lines and pages) should be issued at the same price as the valuable works of the few really good and favourite authors, is certainly an anomaly. One cannot understand it. On the surface of things it would seem that the authors nobody can afford to lose must get too little for their works, or this other large section too much. Or, at any rate, that neither publisher nor public properly estimates the difference: the one apparently can not, the other is helpless, and may not. In the years gone by—and not so very many either—a work if it were worthless could very rarely find a publisher: now, to judge at least by the vast amount of trash fostered on confiding readers who cannot help themselves, the publishers are ready to take the bad and the good indiscriminately. Both classes of books make the same outside show; the same attractive binding, and the guinea-and-half of cost. “There’s something rotten in the state of Denmark.” Indisputably. But who shall discern what that something is; still less, its remedy?

These truths have been called up in consequence of reading a new book, “Under Lock and Key.” That two gentlemen, one a long-known and experienced author, the other a fresh aspirant, comparatively speaking, in the field of literature, should each, unknown to the other, pitch upon the self-same subject for a work of fiction, and at the same period of time, is notably strange. Nevertheless, it is a fact. When the first portion of Wilkie Collins’ “Moonstone” appeared in the pages of “All the Year Round,” the whole plot of Thomas Speight’s “Great

Mogul Diamond" was drawn out, and its commencing chapters were already in the hands of his publisher. Mr. Speight, in this unlucky contretemps, finished his own work without looking at a line of the other. I believe he had doubts at first whether he ought to bring it out at all or to suppress it; and he changed the title from "The Great Mogul Diamond" to "Under Lock and Key," so that in that point at least the two books should not clash. The Great Mogul is described as a big green diamond, worth a hundred and fifty thousand pounds; the Moonstone as a big yellow; but each one seems to be, historically, nearly identical with the other. Besides the actual subject of the books, there is some considerable similarity in the mode each author has chosen to tell his story in—by letters and diaries. With that the resemblance ends, for the stories in themselves are totally dissimilar.

Except in so far as that they are both of wonderful interest. How the attention was enchain'd and the imagination excited in reading the "Moonstone" we all remember; for in his peculiar line Wilkie Collins has no living rival. If put in close comparison with his, Mr. Speight's book must suffer: he has not yet the unerring craft of the master-hand. But "Under Lock and Key" has this excellence; once taken up, you cannot put it down. It shows, in parts, feeble composition; it has some faults of construction and of plot; it is unequally written; but for all that, it ranks amidst the small catalogue of books that we welcome with a kind of thankfulness, for they wile us out of ourselves and our sorrows, they flash across the mind amidst the day's work and its perplexing cares as a bit of bright pleasure we hold in store to return to in the evening. And this is the true test of a novel's merits—our anxiety to get back to it. How few such are there! Nothing in "Under Lock and Key" can be in its way more painfully interesting than that chapter entitled "Haunted," though it brings a shiver with it. Thomas Speight has the wherewithal to make himself a popular author: as indeed was seen when he brought out that sensational but nevertheless attractive first book of his, "Brought to Light."

AMUSEMENTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS. By E. H. A. Frankland.—We have been solicited to notice this little book in the interests of boys and girls. It is a very clear and well-described lesson on the arts of "Swiss Wood-Carving" and "Diaphanie," put forth in the form of a story. The description of the process is so well defined, the instruction so minute, that boys and girls must be alike muffs if they fail to conquer. The "Diaphanie," or imitation of stained glass, appears to be a remarkably pretty and interesting amusement: mothers may be glad to set their troublesome flock to it, as a means of keeping them happy and quiet during the too long holidays. The book costs but sixpence, and may be read with interest by the young people if they do not turn it to account.